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Dive Travel

MAGAZINE



FROM MALDIVES TO MERMAIDS

*Underwater Miracle: the **MALDIVES** • Full Moon at Bomba's in the **BVI***

*North by Northwest by **NANAIMO** • What's New in **COZUMEL***

*Tying the Knot Dive-Style in **PAPUA NEW GUINEA***

PUERTO GALERA *Then and Now*

*The Magic of **MERMAIDS***

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Maldives

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O Brave New World!

Ah, a new year. Dwindling down to a precious few before the millennium when all the computers go bananas, open warfare breaks out in the streets with satanic cannibals and all those gray-bulb aliens that have been darting around the night skies for years are revealed to be a brilliant, long-range marketing campaign for sinus decongestant and hemorrhoid ointment. And what might the world of diving be like when the proverbial waste impacts the rapidly rotating airfoil, hmmm? Glad you asked.

It is an unfortunate fact that my good friend and our sometime correspondent, the redoubtable Mr. P, recently folded his tent in the onslaught of fiduciary complications and new-age paranoia and high-tailed it for Zamboanga, or Pago Pago, or Bujumbura, or Houston, or some equally God-forsaken outpost. But he continues to send messages and dire predictions about the future of diving and, secondarily, civilization, after those middle digits turn up double zero. According to his personal crystal ball, in the not-so-distant future nearly every manufacturer of Disco-revival wetsuits, and that's just about everybody, will offer an Elvis model, reasonably priced at \$6,723. White, with matching cape will be most popular among dive-masters, mostly for its high visibility, but it doesn't hurt that it goes so well with the new gold-plated heavy chain-and-escutcheon weight belts. The neon-pastel shades will be more popular with the diving public, although there will also be a growing segment of nouveau beat-divers who are devoted to thrift-store black with retro double hoses, horsecollar BCs and beret-style hoods. A direct consequence of the old *Sea Hunt* series coming out on Laser CD cranial implant.

Most resorts will offer nitrox, tri-mix, quad-mix, quin-mix and 20 percent cigarette smoke, or any combination of the above. The best reefs will be assembled from cast polymers and the new ones will even bloom at night with absolutely lifelike artificial coral polyps in a whole rainbow of internally illuminated colors that poor poverty-stricken nature never imagined. All hail vibra-coral, a registered trademark of Reefglow, Inc., a subsidiary of United Heavy Industries and Tochibushi Fishworks. Smart advertisers make sure their reef billboard ads are in a contrasting color. It won't really be cost-effective to light your reef-ad in the daytime, but some of the really big companies, like Dispepsi, R.J. Reamjobs and Microsquirt will do it anyway, and hang the expense! It's nice to know that in the future big corporations will maintain the social conscience

for which they have become justifiably renowned and not sacrifice aesthetics for the bottom line.

But lest you think everything is sweetness and light, be advised that there is a dark side to the future, too. Mr. P wouldn't elaborate on what he proclaimed would be a dramatic incident having to do with the animatronic shark in Dizknees Cozumel Metro Dive Park, but he did tell me that, believe it or not, it will spawn a clique of gonzo-dive punks that actually insist on diving with the old generation of animatronic pelagics hoping for what they refer to as an "Ash Incident." According to P, and we all know he is almost never wrong, these future dive punks will be well versed in the subtle differences between the Glock 10mm submarine laser cannon and the Heckler and Koch underwater implosion grenade.

More subdued dive groups seeking pelagic encounters will go for the dive with the new line of artificial humpback whales who have been programmed to sing Yanni's greatest hits in the digitally sampled voice of "Monad," the last living humpback—kept alive in captivity for years after the rest of her species had starved to death when the permanent global El Niño parboiled all the world's plankton. The new generation of robotic whales will represent a dramatic advance in simu-life technology—ride 'em, stroke 'em, feed 'em and, when a human form passes within the field of the optical motion detector, they'll say "I love you" in Monad's digital voice, and one of 14 languages.

The Maldives, of course, will have long since disappeared beneath the ocean's surface, but for now you can still go there, and in this issue, you can read our own Aryn Kelly's impressions of the place. Better book now. Also in this issue, Heneage Mitchell provides the benefit of his intimate knowledge of Puerto Galera in the Philippines, former editor Heather Cantwell checks out the BVI, *Dive Travel's* own *Queso Grande* Susan Wilmink gives us an update on perennial favorite Cozumel, Graeme Teague returns to Nanaimo, and we are all the honored guests at the Siassi-style wedding of photographers Stuart and Michele Westmorland in Papua New Guinea! Mermaid centerfold! Cartoons! A special live-aboard guide! My stars, so many wonderful things. And so much to look forward to! O brave new world that has such creatures as these!

See you out there, and, as Mr. P might say: stay low. Very, very low.

—John Newman, Editor



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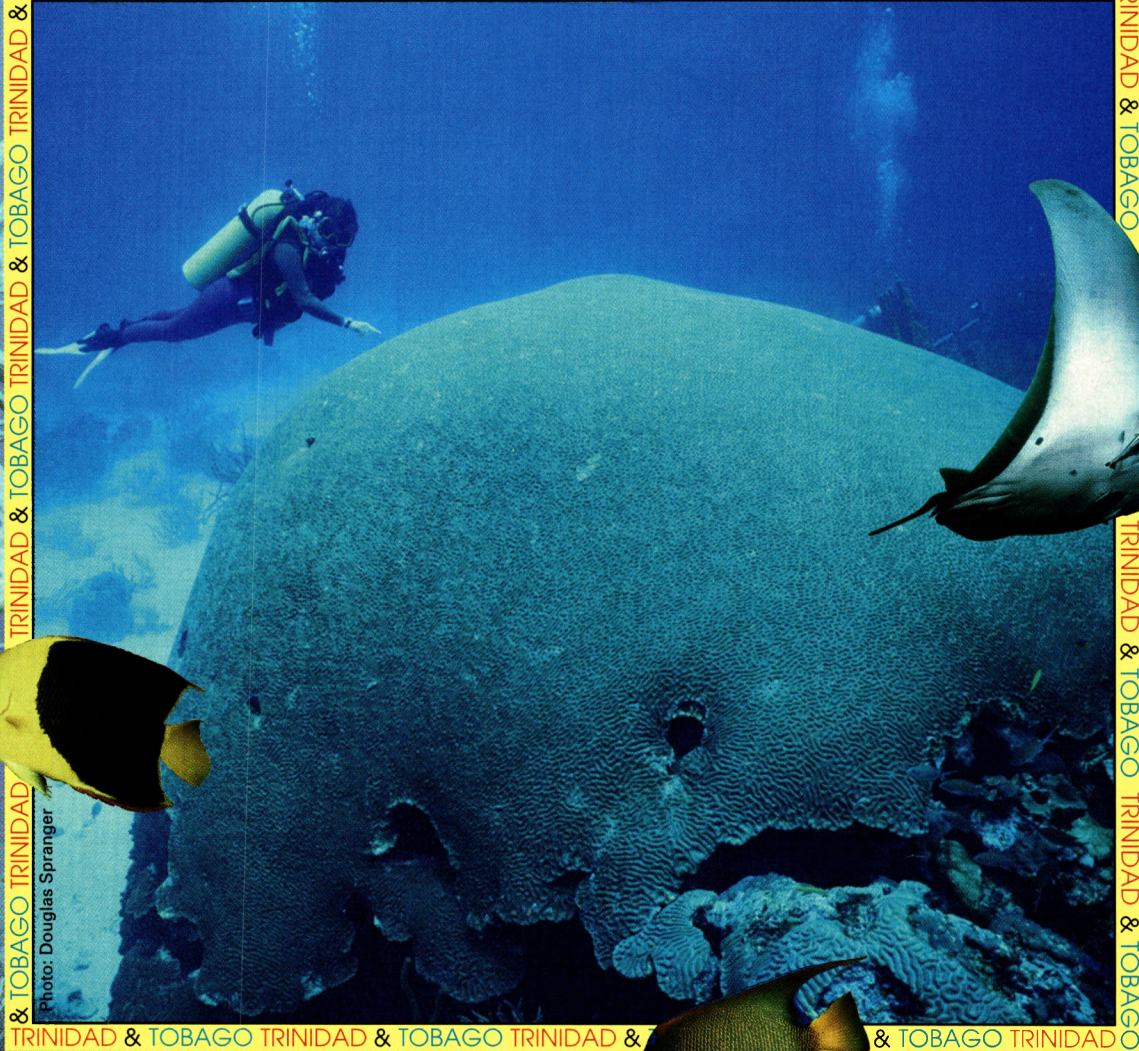


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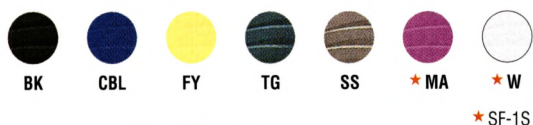
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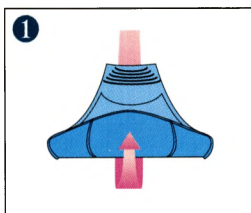


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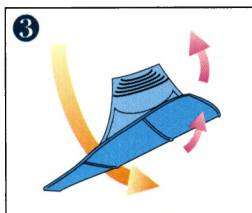


A NEW DIMENSION IN POWER



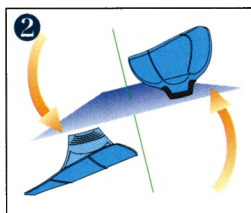
THE PERFECT KICK

The perfect down kick (and power) is generated when the fin moves downward in a completely flat motion, the blade then forces the maximum amount of water backward.



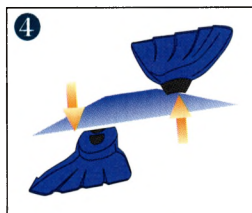
THE POWER LOSS

A curving down kick causes the inside of the blade to twist upward, preventing maximum force and creating a loss of power.



THE REALITY

- Due to the weightless situation in water, a down kick causes the body to roll in the direction of the kick.
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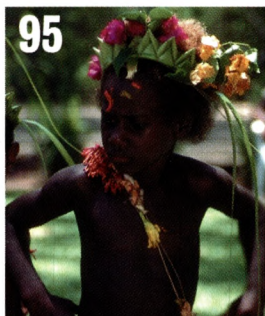
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Clara Taylor Bement

A Vacation for the Mind

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John Newman

If you can't get enough of the fine-flipped female, check out page 98 for the first Dive Travel Magazine Centerfold!

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ON THE COVER...
Howard Schatz's original image was morphed with the underwater images of Amos Nachoum and David Fleetham by our own John Newman

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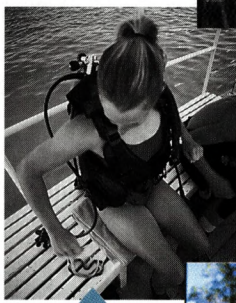
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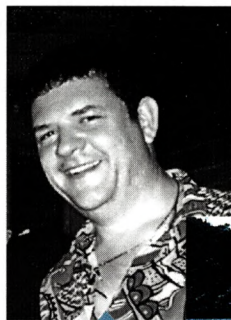
January/February Contributors

Bulletin Magazine in Australia named **Gunther Deichmann** one of the country's leading professional photographers. His work has been a part of several major publications including *Stern* and *Time* in Germany, Japan, Australia and the U.S. Deichmann's work has also graced the covers of several albums, including Midnight Oil's *Blue Sky Mine*. In 1996, Deichmann sent to press his limited edition retrospective, *Images*. He currently resides in Manila, Philippines and galavants through Southeast Asia and the Pacific with his camera. In this issue, you'll find his images of Puerto Galera, Philippines.



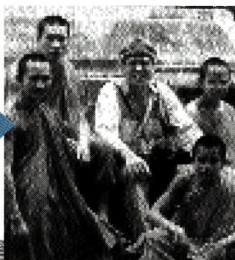
When **Aryn Kelly** is not hard at play—surfing, horseback-riding, snowboarding or, of course, diving—the 22-year-old can be found immersed in her duties here at *Dive Travel*. She began working for the magazine as an intern near the end of her college career at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

And she recently put her skills to good use mixing business and pleasure (how could she not have a good time?) in the Indian Ocean. During surface intervals, she scribbled a few notes for this month's feature on the Maldives.



Heneage Mitchell made his way to Southeast Asia in the late 1970s on expedition as a hydrographic surveyor and never came back. Mitchell, who took up diving while in Thailand, moved to the Philippines where his enthusiasm for recreational diving escalated from mere sport to divemaster, instructor, then diveshop owner. Over the years, Mitchell's work has been a part of several publications, including *Action Asia* and *What's On in Manila*. Every Saturday night, you'll find Heneage Mitchell at the Playhouse Bar in Makati with his band, The Rejects. He shares his

expertise on Philippine diving in this issue's feature on Puerto Galera.



Born in a log cabin in 1809, Honest Milton was a rail-splitter, lawyer and...oops, wrong guy. **Milton Love** is an Associate Research Biologist at the Marine Science Institute, University of California, Santa Barbara. Regarding the fishes of the Pacific Coast, he is one hot potato. Even when he doesn't know the answer to a fish question (which is rare), he lies so successfully that you can't tell the difference. Reading his magnum opus, *Probably More Than You Wanted To*

Know About The Fishes Of the Pacific Coast will change your life in unexpected and exotic ways. His Love Note on extinction this month definitely runs a close second.



Born in Alberta, Canada in 1959, **Graeme Teague's** father launched him on a world discovery tour almost

immediately. By the time Teague was 17, he had spent time in Australia, southern Africa, the Arctic and western Canada, attending seven different schools in 12 years. He dabbled in commercial diving in the Great Lakes and circled some turns in Formula Ford race

cars for a while before settling into professional underwater photography. In 1986, as a qualified PADI instructor, Teague borrowed money from his mother for his first camera system and set off to the Cayman Islands.



In the following five years he traveled, dove and photographed extensively throughout the Caymans, Belize, Netherlands Antilles, Jamaica, Bahamas and Bay Islands. In addition to capturing some outstanding photography, he opened up the then-unknown remote Cochino Islands of Honduras to the diving public.

Dive Travel

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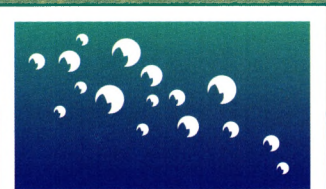
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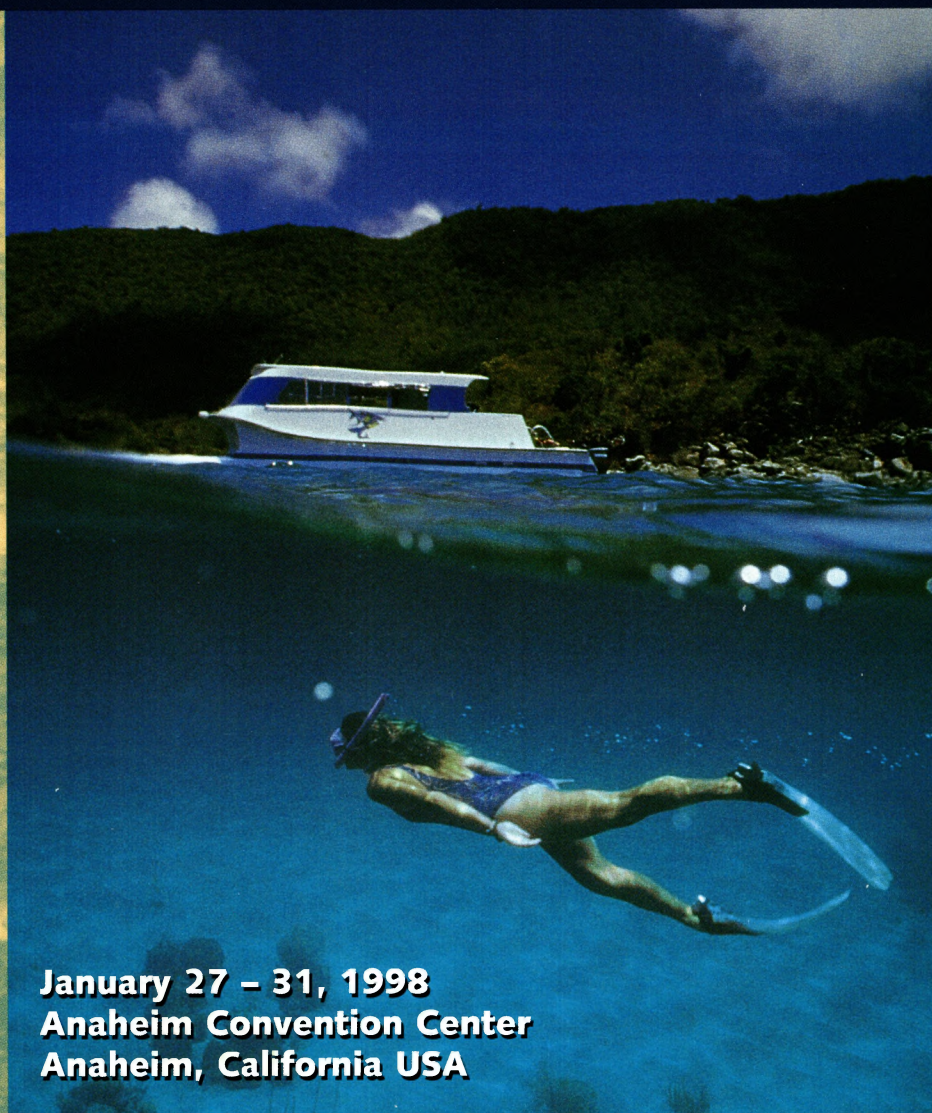
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soundings

THE PROBLEM CHILD IS NO JOKE

El Niño is kicking up a global fuss...

Last fall, the American media blew hot and cold on the El Niño story. It alternately churned out snappy stories with titles like, "El Niño versus el nonsense,"* and trumpeted fire, flood and disaster in the Pacific. Here in the States, an air of 'we can roll with whatever the clouds dish out' prevailed, but as far as traveling went, we didn't. The news—especially the weather reports—from elsewhere seemed too dire.

In Papua New Guinea, nearly 300,000 people were in danger of starving to death, reported the *Christian Science Monitor* in October. According to the Australian Agency for International Development, the drought—caused by El Niño—resulted in a fraction of the normal harvest this year.

On November 20, the *Wall Street Journal* reported the International American Development Bank had approved \$255 million in aid to Ecuador and Peru. The money will assist these countries in preventing flood damage from El Niño storms.

Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia suffered a double dose of climatic bad news. Human-set fires meant to level the rain-forest for agriculture swept out of control as monsoonal rains, the usual endpoint for these fires, failed to arrive—a delay attributable to El Niño. In the super-dry conditions, the fires spread into peat bogs, burning longer than anyone could have foreseen. Blankets of toxic smog rolled over parts of Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, as well as hanging heavy over the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Borneo. The inversion layer blocked out more than sunlight. It kept the tourists away, too.

According to the *New York Times*, hotels in vacation spots like the Malaysian island of Langkawi, which would usually be at 75 percent of capacity in early November were only 10 percent occupied. Other spots in Southeast Asia reported similarly low numbers.

To countries suffering sagging currency—Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand plummeted 20 to 30 percent this year—the lack of visitors is particularly bad economic weather. Counting on tourists' dollars, deutschmarks and yen to get them through hard times, airlines and resorts are particularly hard hit.

**Los Angeles Times*, 11/14/97



And the knife cut both ways. Travelers who anticipated spectacular deals on vacations in Southeast Asia, aren't sure whether or not to go. Are the skies clear? Have the rains finally arrived? Is the water chilly? It's hard to know from a distance, so we checked in with a few of our friends around the Pacific....

From North Sulawesi, Indonesia, Roel Jong writes, "Our resort was affected by the fires, but not in the way it came out in the publicity." The Manado area, according to Jong, doesn't have a timber industry, and the rain forest is not large, as it is on Kalimantan, Sumatra and Irian Jaya. Although Jong reported some haze last fall, he writes, "We think El Niño had more effect on our underwater environment. Before the drought started, we had a few weeks of cold water, about [74°F], which is very cold for here, and relatively bad visibility, about [33 feet]. According to the reports, this had never happened before. We also had periods with a lot of jellyfish, harmless ones, which are also unusual for this area."

Jong, manager of Tasik Ria Diving Resort in Manado, had other concerns, too. "We lost business, but how much we don't know. We had many calls from worried guests who saw their holidays 'going up in smoke.' It was a lot of effort to convince them there was nothing wrong in Manado."

Jong is deeply concerned about the effects of the fires. "It's an enormous ecological tragedy. . . . and a big question what effect it will have on the rest of the environment. . . ." He added, "Reporters and tourists often don't know what a huge country Indonesia is [about 3,000 miles, east to west]. If the media reports fires in Indonesia, readers think the problem is in the whole country. It's causing a big loss of income for the tourist/dive industry."

If you've been snoozing for the last eight months. . . El Niño, a shift in global climate patterns, occurs about every three to seven years. Characterized by large areas of unusually warm water in the eastern Pacific, El Niño typically delivers heavier rainfall and hurricanes to the eastern Pacific, flooding to the southeastern U.S., and drought to much of Asia and Africa.

soundings

It was a sentiment echoed by other voices. "We were affected by the haze as the flight was not able to take off [at the airport]. But the resort is super clear now," writes Lawrence

Lee of Layang Layang in Malaysia, although he acknowledged that the resort suffered a loss of business last fall. Lee adds, "And we have no effects of El Niño on Layang Layang."

Matthew

Hedrick of Dive Asia Pacific in Phuket, Thailand, says the jury's still out on El Niño's marine effects in his area. "Hard to say," writes Hedrick, "as there is a fair amount of 'normal' variation here. Water temperatures seem up, but sea life remains abundant."

In the Tukang Besi islands, Sulawesi, Indonesia, marine temperatures fell. "Sea water this year was very often two degrees colder than former years, due to unusual current patterns," writes Lorenz Mäder, owner of Wakatobi Divers. "Dry season was about ten weeks longer than former years," he adds, "almost zero rainfall for seven months in a row."

While Wakatobi did not suffer a water shortage, the resort paid in other ways. "Despite the fact that we never experienced haze in our remote corner, guests who intended to combine Tukang Besi with a visit to other areas in Indonesia, cancelled their reservations. We were indirectly affected badly."

Mäder joined Jong, Hedrick and Lee in encouraging divers to come on over. "Due to better exchange rates," Mäder explains, "you get even better holidays for your money now."

Mike Espinosa of Maluku Adventures summed it up for the Asia-focused resorts. "On a local level, people are definitely still hurting, but for travelers, Southeast Asia has suddenly turned into a bargain."

Closer to home, the problem child threw its weight around with major fall storms on Mexico's west coast and in Southern California. El Niño's warm water delivered tropical fish to San Francisco's water.

On Costa Rica's Pacific coast, "the rainy season that officially ended in November never really began," writes Ben Hillman of Bill Beard's Diving

Safaris. "The water has remained particularly warm for this time of year, and has caused some of the larger schooling fish, such as mahi-mahi to travel further north." While fishermen haven't been pleased, "warm waters and 80-foot-plus visibility have been a bonus to diving. We've noticed

some of the fish stocks down on a few sea mounts and long-range sites, but everything else is intact," writes Hillman, "sharks, turtles. . . all the species that we normally see on local dives."

• • • • •

In an October editorial in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Stuart Kirsch and Conservation International's John Burke noted, "El Niño reveals unseen connections between people and places ordinar-

ly thought of as distant and remote. While the consequences are different, we share the effects. . . ." And the effects of El Niño—be they fire, flood, famine or changes in water temperature—will continue to make themselves felt throughout the winter if global meteorologists are correct in their predictions.

We are connected with the people of Southeast Asia, residents of Ecuador and Peru, researchers in the Galápagos, Great Barrier Reef boat crews, and coastal dwellers in Costa Rica by the magnificence of the Pacific Ocean. We are all subject to its moods, and live within its influence. Are you wondering whether to make a trip to Phuket, Sulawesi, Port Douglas or the Gulf of Papagayo? Thinking El Niño's effects have devastated your vacation? Before you cancel your trip based on what you read in the paper, crank up your hard drive, dial the fax, or pick up the phone. Most resort owners and dive operators overseas are perfectly willing to share information about their region. Here in 1998, we need not be separated by the same ocean that connects us; let the Pacific join us together.



Day of the Dolphin

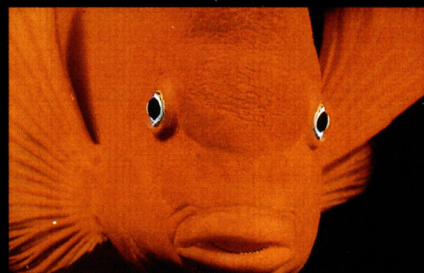
In many ways the dolphin has become the living symbol of humankind's alienation from the natural world. With their well-documented intelligence, complex social structure and gregarious nature, they provide much with which we can identify, and at the same time they appear to have accomplished something we might well envy—an existence in harmony with their natural environment. Whether or not that admitted romantic notion is true, no one who has ever swam in open water in the company of a wild dolphin will ever forget the experience. You can have that opportunity in late

May, to accompany photographer Amos Nachoum and our own John Newman, when they mount an expedition to the Little Bahama Banks to gather materials for a story that will appear in a subsequent issue of *Dive Travel*. The trip will include six days with wild Atlantic spotted dolphins aboard the 55-foot *M/V Ocean Explorer*. The OEX was commissioned in 1995 and designed specifically for dive trips to the Bahamas. The dolphins on the Little Bahama Banks have been interacting with human visitors for three generations and are the only group of wild dolphins in the world known to do so. The expedition will depart from Miami and be limited to only six guests. Interested? Contact Amos Nachoum at: Tel - (415) 923-9865, Fax - (415) 776-8489, email - Amosphoto@aol.com.

And The Winners Are...



Michael Bjornback, 1st place, California Wide Angle



Michael Bjornback, 1st place, California Macro



Michael Kennedy, 1st place, Saltwater Wide Angle



Terry Schuller, 1st place, Saltwater Macro



Rudy Whitworth, 1st place, Freshwater/Brackish

Destination Diving, held at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, hosted the show's first underwater photographic/video competition in August. The entrants were judged by famed underwater photographer/cinematographer Norbert Wu. Prize sponsors for the contest included the Curaçao Department of Tourism, Faulkner Color Labs, Dave Satterberg, Norbert Wu, PADI, DAN, Mares, Dacor, Oceanic, Sherwood, OceanBrite Systems, Monterey Express, Underwater World, TUSA and Cetacea. For information on next year's contest, email the competition directors at scuba2me@msn.com.

The winners of the 1997 *Destination Diving* Competition are as follows:

CALIFORNIA WIDE ANGLE:

- 1st —Michael Bjornback
- 2nd —Michael Bjornback
- 3rd —Kathy DeWet-Olson

CALIFORNIA MACRO:

- 1st —Michael Bjornback
- 2nd —Michael Bjornback
- 3rd —Reggie Brown

SALTWATER WIDE ANGLE:

- 1st —Michael Kennedy
- 2nd —Michael Kennedy
- 3rd —Ray Berch

SALTWATER MACRO:

- 1st —Terry Schuller
- 2nd —Chris Bradford
- 3rd —Rudy Whitworth

FRESHWATER/BRACKISH:

- 1st —Rudy Whitworth
- 2nd —Jan Troup
- 3rd —Michael Kennedy

VIDEO:

- 1st —Fred Heiman
- 2nd —Fred Heiman
- 3rd —John & Marilyn Walker

COLOR PRINTS:

- 1st —Kevin Roland
- 2nd —Bob Spiers
- 3rd —Kameron Thompson

BLACK & WHITE PRINTS:

- 1st —Bob Spiers
- 2nd —Simon Oliver
- 3rd —Simon Oliver

P.S. Sharyn Spray of Joppa, Maryland, is now toting all her gear around in a new Exo-Tote dive bag, compliments of Tilos and Dive Travel...enter to win something groovy yourself (maybe even an all-expenses paid dive trip!) at www.divetravel.com.



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—Jean-Michel Cousteau

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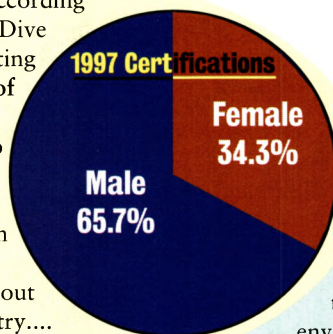
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soundings

According to DEMA (Dive Equipment Marketing Association), 34.3% of Open Water Scuba Certificates were issued to women in 1995, up from 27.2% in 1985. Apparently more women are not going to let scuba slip by without giving it a try....



As global warming increases, so do the high waves that threaten low-lying island nations in the South Pacific. Controversy ensued at the South Pacific Forum in September, where 15 small island states battled powerful Australia over **proposed limitations on greenhouse gas emissions**. Claiming that greenhouse effects were still under debate, Australia's Prime Minister John Howard proposed that the nations not support uniform cuts in gas emissions at the Kyoto environmental conference. Howard refused to budge on the issue, stating that "[his] responsibility at the end of the day, always above everything else, is to protect Australian interests." Eventually, unable to make a compromise with Australia, the island states unhappily agreed not to demand uniform cuts. At the conference in Kyoto, Australia succeeded in becoming one of the few countries entitled to increase its emissions. Meanwhile, island nations are building landfill dams in an attempt to protect their cities and homes from the rising waves, fearing that one day their islands will disappear entirely beneath the rising seas.

The Save the Manatee Club is running an **Adopt-A-Manatee** special! For \$20 SMC will send an adoption certificate, underwater photo, and 28-page membership handbook. With a diminishing population of only 2,600, manatees are an endangered species. The grim status of these amiable warm-water mammals is due in large part to water craft collisions and habitat loss. Adopting one of the 27 lovely, large and leisurely manatees in the SMC program assists in funding the club's efforts in education, public awareness, research, rescue and rehabilitation. Each manatee has its own personal characteristics—Merlin is always late, Brutus is big (1,800 pounds), Rosie takes in orphans, and Betsy gets in everybody's business.

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According to a new survey commissioned by Tour & Travel News and Hyatt Resorts, **65% of leisure travelers turn to travel agents for information**—and half of them are willing to pay a fee for an agent's assistance in planning a trip to a resort destination. Overall, leisure travelers are highly satisfied with their current travel agent (8.5 on a 10-point scale), and report using the same individual travel agent for an average of six years, indicating a high degree of client loyalty. And when compared to services provided by other professionals, travel agents hold their own: 80% of those surveyed would pay someone to fix their car, 17% would pay someone to plan a wedding, and 46% would pay someone to plan and book a resort vacation.

The Epistemology of Travel

"For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move."

—Robert Louis Stevenson
Travels with a Donkey,
1878

For those of you who can't stand to be land-locked and dream of living in a place surrounded by sea, here's a list of some spots you should check out—**countries with the most islands.**

Country	Sea/Ocean	# of Islands
Malaysia	Pacific/Indian	20,000
Indonesia	Pacific	13,677
Canada	Pacific/Arctic/Atlantic	11,000
Philippines	Pacific	7,100
Finland	Gulf of Bothnia	6,080
PNG	Pacific	2,000
Maldives	Indian	1,190
Marshalls	Pacific	1,200+
Japan	Pacific	1,000+

Of course, there may be complications taking up residence in some of these countries, and remember, no man or woman, is an island—unto themselves.

Calendar

February 21 21st Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival

Michigan—This festival features a multi-image presentation of freshwater shipwrecks by local area shipwreck hunters and exciting saltwater programs from tropical destinations, plus seminars on underwater adventure and exploration. A must for anyone interested in the mysteries of the Great Lakes.

February 22-23 Barbados Horticultural Society Flower Show

Christ Church—This eagerly anticipated annual event transforms Balls Plantation into a blaze of color as it demonstrates the winning form that has netted the Barbados Horticultural Society several gold medals at Britain's prestigious Chelsea Flower Show.

February 24-25 Bale Zamboanga Festival

Philippines—A two-day celebration participated in by both Christians and Muslims of the region. It features regattas, fairs, indigenous dances, and colorful costumes.

April 2-5 Asia Dive Expo '98

Singapore—Plan now to attend the inaugural presentation of Asia's largest and most important marine event. If you are in the business of diving, you cannot miss this show. Contact IIR Exhibitions at 011-65-227-0688, Fax 011-65-227-0913 or email adrial@iirx.com.sg.



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That's right, walking on fire. On your dive holiday in Fiji, you'll have as many unique and amazing experiences above the crystal clear waters as you will below - village visits, exciting mekes and the ubiquitous yaqona ceremony. With a culture that has remained virtually unchanged for centuries, you'll be fascinated by the many age-old traditions you'll share with the friendly, gentle Fijian people.



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Interactive Traveler

Sometimes traveling close to home is more thorny than whisking off to an exotic, far-away locale. But who wants to go through a hassle to plan his or her next domestic dive trip? Check out **The Insider's Guide Online** to smooth out the kinks of traveling in North America.

www.insiders.com

A high-quality travel guide focusing on North American locations, **The Insider's Guide** is written by local authors who cover all the basics and then some. They write about the best places to eat, sleep, shop, visit and even study. They inform about practical transportation and enchant with tales of the history of the place. The website offers all the information featured in their detailed guidebooks, and presents it in a sophisticated way. **The Insider's Guide** uses up-to-the-minute programming to create an easy-to-handle, easy-to-overview and easy-to-navigate site that loads fast. Connecting the look and feel of the site, the sidebar on every page contains a table of contents and gives helpful hints relevant to the current page. The website opens with a map of the continental U.S. marked with links where guides are available—an alphabetical table of all guided areas is also located at the bottom of the page. Webdivers might also use the site-specific search engine to find out about special hotels or cities. The **Quick Planner** is another helpful tool—it "helps you to make your travel plans now, so you can hit the ground running when you arrive." With detailed descriptions of hotels, restaurants, shopping places and service points, the **Quick Planner** also categorizes results by degrees of expense, so you immediately know what will fit your budget and what will break it. The **Quick Index** on the accommodation pages provides a quick overview of all hotels, bed and breakfasts, hostels...if you can sleep there, it's listed. A convenient link option is to **Buy the Book**, which offers the opportunity for online purchase through a secure server. A toll-free number is also displayed for those who still prefer talking to another human. What's missing from **The Insider's Guide** is links to those operations mentioned that have their own websites, (i.e. universities, restaurants, hotels). Their absence may prevent a user from getting stuck in the Web, but links could enhance the sites use-ability, allowing the user to actually contact potential business.

—Korbinian Frank

Of Sharks and Sangría

Feliz in Belize

A nurse shark swam by, undoubtedly looking for a meal. It rubbed my leg like a house cat. I reached out and gently let my hand caress its leathery back. My first day in Belize and I was already petting sharks. To the right, a large grouper kept me in check with a cautious grouper eye. A school of yellowtail snapper took to me and my black and yellow shorts like I was one of their own. A brilliant moray eel glided gently into a rotted hole in the small sunken freighter that it called home. Welcome to Belize.

I arrived in Ambergris Caye after being invited to tag along with the folks at Experience the Adventure Tours (ETA) and participate in the Belize Extravaganza—a package that included a full week of accommodations at some of Ambergris' nicest resorts—Belize Yacht Club and the Villas at Banyan Bay—and included several specialty dive lectures, a volleyball tournament, a beach barbecue, and a raffle that awarded prizes including sunglasses, dive watches, Sherwood regulators, TUSA snorkel gear, dive alerts, and much more. Last year's Extravaganza was such a blast that this year ETA plans on doing five separate weeks of specialty diving, including Belize, Jamaica, Cayman Brac, the Bay Islands and Puerto Rico.

Ambergris Caye is a small island just south of the Yucatán on the Caribbean side of Belize. It is more than 20 miles in length and less than a mile wide in most places. A good part of Ambergris is marshland and most of the local population lives in the small town of San Pedro at the south end.

The roads are unpaved, but everything is within walking distance—ten minutes from one end of town to the other. If you're feeling lazy, catch a cab or rent a golf cart or bike for a modest fee. In San Pedro you will find good food, good beer, a multitude of small shops, a few choice night clubs and some of the friendliest and most interesting local people anywhere.

Spend a little extra for a boat to the mainland for a day-trip to the ruins at Altun Ha—and have lunch at a plush jungle spa. Or, for a diversion of another kind, catch a water taxi to the north end of the island and spend the evening listening to eclectic music and sipping sangría by the fireplace, while Mata Chica's Resort prepares an authentic Italian meal in an elegant lodge setting.

But San Pedro is a town built on diving and the second longest living barrier reef in the world is only a ten minute boat ride straight off shore.



Jeff Nagy

New friends on your first day, first dive—welcome to Belize.

The best diving is in the submarine canyons that transverse the reef between enormous coral battlements, or “fingers” as the locals call them. On the outer atolls there are some incredible drift and wall dives. And one of Belize’s greatest diving attractions is the Blue Hole—a limestone sinkhole 412 feet deep and 300 feet wide.

Water temperature in Belize is 84° year-round. I spent the week diving in board shorts and a long-sleeve rash guard and I was never cold—a big change from the cold Monterey Bay waters at home. The 85° plus air temperature is made comfortable by the consistent, mild tradewinds that blow across the Caribbean from the east.

In Ambergris, there are many excellent dive operators all with comparable expertise. I spent my week diving with Amigos del Mar and Bottom Time, but finding an operator wasn’t my concern. The people of ETA took care of everything.

Typically, divers compile running list of the species they spot. Around Ambergris, you never see a short list. In a week of diving I encountered manta rays, eagle rays, electric rays, parrotfish, octopi, moray eels, spotted eels, big schools of yellowtail snapper, sea cucumbers, turtles, crowds of nurse sharks and to top it off, I swam with wild dolphins—not once, but twice.

“We just found the dolphins for our boat, beat that!” shouted our divemaster, Ruben Navidad, to the crew on a passing dive boat.

Belizean divemasters have an ongoing, informal competition to see who can show their group the best time. Navidad won bragging rights for that night.

My journey home began aboard a nine-seat Cessna back to the mainland and Belize International Airport. I reflected on my week of diving, dining and piña colodas made from the fruit of the coconut palms right outside my room. Below, the white wake of the dive boats were, once again, heading out to the reef. I found myself silently repeating to myself the phrase I had heard so many times during my all-too-short stay on Ambergris Caye, “I wish I could stay here forever.”

—Jeff Nagy

For more information about the Belize Extravaganza and Extravaganza packages to Jamaica, Cayman Brac, the Bay Islands and Puerto Rico, contact Experience the Adventure Tours: Tel - (800) 815-5019, Fax - (305) 261-6648, Email - ETATours@aol.com



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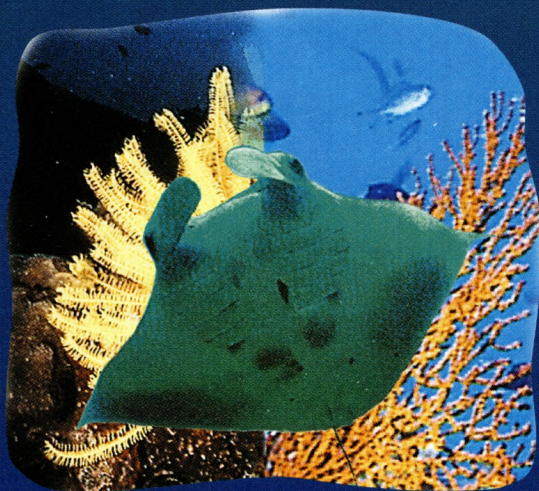
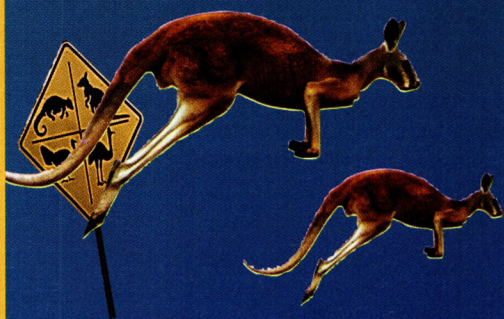
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Diving Domestic

In Between Exotica, Explore Your Own Underwater Backyard

Don the Drysuit, Hit the Ice

The sun shines deceptively bright this time of year in Minnesota, a fantastic misrepresentation of the severe cold outside. This is the cold that forces people to bundle themselves thick as the Michelin Man—it is extreme. Minnesotans love it, though those who endure the acrimonious season also develop an appreciation of heat. But a few months into it, when the treachery of black ice is tiresome and the Mall of America has simply lost its charm, even that precious warmth is worth sacrificing for something new to do. Northland Divers says grin and bear it: get wet.

After the ice thickens to a safe solidity, Myron Haynes crunches through the snow with a troupe of divers ready to carve a wedge-shaped entrance through the surface of the frozen lake—ice ranging from five inches to three feet thick. Haynes, the owner of Northland Divers in Maplewood, Minnesota, says wet-suits are acceptable attire, but for ice-diving newbies and those who do not have anti-freeze pumping through their veins, the coziness of a dry suit in the 39° water is often the better option.

What do they do down there? The basic idea is to visit the fish and take pictures, but ice diving adds a twist with a type of underwater upside-down skiing—someone topside pulls the diver by the leashline along the underside of the ice.

After about 30 minutes at a depth of 15 to 30 feet, divers reappear at the hole and hoist themselves out into the cold, cold world. Much to the joy of the wet ones in slowly stiffening suits, Northland Divers provides heated tents. Myron Barnes, a long-time ice diver, pauses before explaining why he dives in a frozen lake. “Because it’s there,” he says, chuckling. The season runs from January to March, so suit up and leave the heat behind, it’s time for another certification! Contact Northland Divers at (612) 777-4278.

—Jennifer Ebrahimi

Dive and Ski, All in One Day

It begins as “the greatest snow on earth” and becomes the only warm-water diving in the continental United States. After seeping over a mile below the earth’s surface, snow-melt from the Wasatch Mountains gurgles up into a mineral rich spring at 96°, a temperature that remains constant throughout the year. Past overflows from the hot springs have built up the sloping mound of the 55-foot rock dome covering the Homestead Crater in Midway, Utah. A tunnel 110 feet long was recently bored through the crater’s north side, and now the mineral hot-spot is easily accessible.

So why access it? The warm azure water, current-free, attracts divers, snorkelers, swimmers and anyone else interested in seeing the inside of a geothermal spring. The dome rises around an opening 45 feet above the water’s surface, and the depths plunge down to 65 feet. On the floor of the crater, a thick layer of fine silt covers thousands of years of history.

But the main attraction for divers is the snow-covered mountains outside. If you stay at the Homestead Resort, you literally can dive in mega-tropical fresh water and visit one of the eight nearby ski resorts in the same day. Also within recreation distance: golfing, hiking, windsurfing... just about any sport that ends in -ing. Homestead even offers scuba certification courses (in addition to a slew of other bonuses) as part of their 5-night lodging packages. If you’re interested, contact Homestead at (800) 327-7220.

—Nyra Jean



Book Report

Aqua Quest Publications has figured it out...divers want to know exactly what to expect out of an underwater destination. With the revised edition of ***Diving Bonaire***, by George Lewbel and Larry Martin, divers get what they want. Dive profiles of Bonaire’s 58 best (popular as well as the “out-of-the-way”) sites feature depth, experience level, current activity, accessibility and directions on how to get there. If the site has a particular attraction, be it elephant-ear sponges, tarpon, or orange cup corals, Lewbel and Martin let you know all about it. Sites that are particularly good for snor-

keling are also highlighted. In addition to the dive site details, the 132 pages are filled with information on Bonaire’s marine life, hotels, dive shops, dining, history, and basics. Three appendices list emergency numbers and contact information for resorts and dive centers on the island. A major plus for a dive guide, *Diving Bonaire* is filled with beautiful photography throughout. There are currently 13 books in Aqua Quest Diving series, and more are on the way.

To order, contact Aqua Quest at (800) 933-8989, or (516) 759-0476. The cost is \$18.95, plus shipping.

Diving with a Difference

*If You Have a Taste
for History,
Underwater Turkey
Has a Story to Tell*

Someone could go to Turkey, never take a dive and be satisfied. Yet there are those people for whom a vacation is not complete without a dive—if it's an option, they're in the water.

If traveling the Aegean coast, make Bodrum a stop on the trip. Not only is the town itself charming, with rows of whitewashed buildings dripping with bright bougainvillea, but the waters here are unique. Beneath the blanket of turquoise and green they reveal a history of the world according to vessels lost in their depths. Dr. George F. Bass, President of The Institute of Nautical Archeology and professor of underwater archeology at Texas A and M University, uncovered a corner of Turkey's secret treasure in 1960.

Over one hundred wrecks were found on his expedition in only a small stretch of sea. Since then, the Institute has accounted for 800 wrecks. Located in Bodrum, the Institute is now in the process of adding a three-story library to its already well established research center—with all the new underwater discoveries, the research division has been busy ever since its conception.

Nearby, the Museum of Underwater Archeology eagerly awaits visitors. On display are the results of nearly 40 years of nautical excavation. It is home to the world's oldest shipwreck—from 1300 BC—in addition to all artifacts recovered from the Aegean coast. Not only are the contents of the museum fascinating, so is the building itself. The MUA is housed in the castle of St. Peter, a handsome product of the fif-

Travel Reservation Systems

Geared to help all sides of the travel industry—wholesalers, retailers, owner/operators and consumers—**Travel Reservation Systems** has launched a unique online

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teenth century. The fortress commands a panoramic view from an from an ocean point in front of the city and across from the harbor. For divers and history buffs this is a must see.

Turkey has an amazing historical story to tell below the surface, but the tale is not easily accessed. Diving is restricted—do not expect to be able to rent a few tanks and dive into the best underwater archeology has to offer. A lot of the best sights are currently off limits. Although Dr. Bass has scouted out a few prime sites where a diver could see four different wrecks on one dive, his efforts to persuade the government to open an underwater park have not yet had much of an effect. Until the Turkish government changes its mind, the best bet is to dive with a shop.

The visibility is astounding. Look for small wrecks and *amphora*, the very large clay storage containers that were simply dumped overboard when empty. Even if you can't yet see the best of the best, pretending to be an underwater archeologist on the historical hunt can be fun. And what you can see will still astound you.

Turkey, who knew?

—Jennifer Ebrahimi

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The eminent marine biologist and salt-water sage once again tells you more than you probably wanted to know about everything.

Marine Extinctions

T.H. Huxley and the last, lost limpet....

It's a long way between now and 1880. You know, the time just after cholera was big and just before the automobile made its entrance. When people bathed just enough to allow you to breathe when walking down the streets. But it was also before the invention of plastic fingernails, cheese in a tube and those wretched garden gnomes, and there were some pretty cool people hanging around. Take Thomas Huxley for instance.

This British scientist was one remarkable dude, a gentleman way, way ahead of his time. For example, here's what he had to say about education for women in 1865, a time when that was perceived as a laughable proposition and Britain was run by a passel of plump white guys with gouty big toes: "Let us have 'sweet girl graduates' by all means. They will be none the less sweet for a little wisdom; and the 'golden hair' will not curl less gracefully outside the head by reason of there being brains within." Pretty far-sighted stuff there.

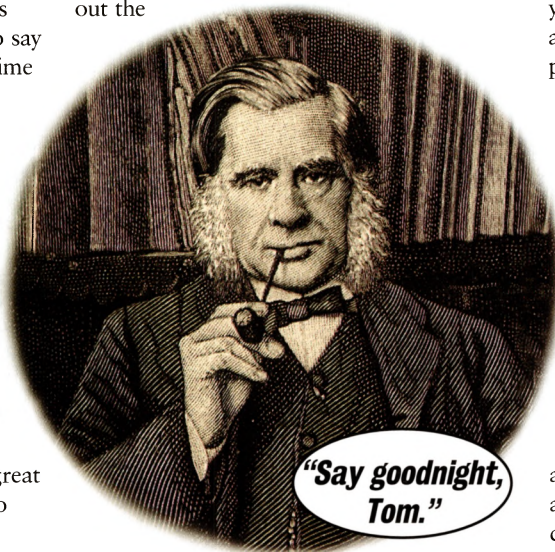
And here's what he wrote in 1883: "I believe that the cod fishery, the herring fishery, the pilchard fishery, the mackerel fishery, and probably all the great sea-fisheries are inexhaustible; that is to say that nothing we can do seriously affects the numbers of fish."

Okay, so he was wrong on that score. Wrong, big time. In fact, there is growing evidence that humans, through over-fishing, habitat degradation and the inadvertent introduction of non-native species, may be doing the number big time on many marine species. Through our usual overabundance of hubris and underabundance of foresight, we may be busily chauffeuring them down the interstate to extinction.

The deal is that, for a very long time, it was assumed that we just couldn't have much of an impact on marine organisms. I mean, how can you kill off anything that lives in something so big that it is Nature's equivalent of Starbucks? How could you

even find every last individual of a species? Well, for large, highly visible organisms, like some coastal-dwelling mammals (the Stellar sea cow comes to mind), it was not hard at all. And indeed, that species did bite the big one.

But even more insidious is what may be happening to those animals that we can't track accurately, everything from commercially important fishes to rarely seen anemones. The problem is that it may not be necessary to kill every individual to wipe out the



species. Take the white abalone, for instance. Until a couple of decades ago, white abs were common off southern California; some reefs contained more than 50,000 per hectare. A large commercial fishery developed, complete with regulations designed to protect the species. But something went wrong. In the last few years, Gary Davis and associates, of the National Park Service, have found almost no white abs off southern California. So were all of these abs harvested by fishermen? Nope. What was not known at the time was that white abs can't reproduce unless they are within a few feet of one another, close enough for a meeting of the eggs and sperm they expel into the

water. You could have millions of white abs sitting every 30 feet all along the coast of California and Baja California and they might eventually still go extinct. It's like having all the people on earth permanently positioned exactly two feet apart. Because we couldn't reproduce at two feet apart (well, most of us can't), within about 120 years we would go extinct. Another bothersome thing is that the ocean is really opaque—it's hard to see what is going on down below. It's not like on land, where you have lots of people just sort of looking around all the time. When the passenger pigeon went extinct in 1914—the predictable result of shooting them out of the sky and cutting down the trees they lived in—folks pretty well had that figured out in a jiffy. It was more-or-less, "Hey Frankie, have you seen those pigeons around lately?" When a flatworm dies out on a coral reef, the result, let's say, of pollution due to land erosion, you just don't hear many people say, "Hey Frankie, have you seen those flatworms around lately?" As an example, there was once a limpet that was common in the eelgrass along the eastern seaboard. Apparently around 1930, most of the eelgrass died off due to disease and the limpet went extinct. But it wasn't until 1991 that this extinction was documented.

So, how many other animals have died out without our notice?

Well, that's it. No rending of garments and beating of breasts. No sappy exhortations to do better by Planet Earth. No slapping you upside the head with a metaphorical salami made of pureed and lightly spiced environmental guilt.

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Manado offers spectacular, world-class diving with sites ranging from beginning to expert. **Taman Nasional Laut Bunaken-Manado Tua**, a marine reserve easily reached by boat from Manado City, offers world-class diving at over 18 excellent dive sites—all, feature the winning combination of superb visibility and weak currents.

- **Bunaken Island** is surrounded by a reef so rife with marine life and coral that, from this one island, it's possible to see the majority of Indonesia's approximately 3,000 different varieties of reef fish. Bunaken's 13 dive sites offer steep coral walls, small caves and abundant reef fish. Among them: • **Lekuan I, II, and III** has weak currents and clear water—ideal for beginners and for night dives.
- **Mike's Point**, named for photographer Mike Severns, a frequent contributor to *Dive Travel Magazine*, is an exhilarating wall-dive. Strong currents and depths of 100 feet or more make this site most suitable for intermediate to advanced divers.
- **Raymond** has a lush wall—a popular hang-out for colubrine sea snakes.
- **Montehage**, a large, flat island north of Bunaken, has diverse terrain.

North of the island, a community of Bajo fishermen live in a village raised on stilts above a shallow reef. The western and southern coasts are best for diving. • **Bango** starts off with a slope and climaxes with a wall with soft coral growth and caves.

• **Gorango**, which means "shark" in the local dialect, is a good place to catch pelagic activity. A steep wall drops 120 feet.

• **Barracuda Point**, a steep slope from 15 to 60 feet, turns into a sheer wall at about 90 feet. Look for schools of barracuda and shark at relatively shallow depths.

• **Manado Tua ("Old Manado")**, a dormant volcano west of Bunaken, has three wall dives on its western coast—all with sharks and good coral growth, though Tanjung Kopi is sometimes swept by strong currents.

• **Batu Kapal ("Stone Boat")** slopes down 137 feet to a coral formation shaped like a boat. At this point, a canyon plunges to abyssal depths. Look for crocodile fish, blue ribbon eels and sharks.

• **The Manado Wreck**, a steel-hulled German merchant ship that sank in 1942, rests only five minutes from Molas beach. Best found by an experienced guide, the wreck requires good underwater lights for penetration, as visibility is poor to non-existent. This is a deep dive, and it's easy to get engrossed in the wreck, so watch your gauges closely.



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Nusa Penida, a one-and-a-half hour boat-ride from Kuta/Nusa Dua/Sanur, offers more challenging diving. Strong currents and surge lead to rough conditions, so divers should select guides carefully. Upwellings promise good visibility and currents. Drop-offs and steep

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slopes bustle with hard coral, sweetlips, mantas, sharks, oceanic sunfish, hawksbill turtles, and scores of pelagics.

Candi Dasa and Padangbai provide a wide assortment of diving. The coastline of Amuk Bay offers shallow, undemanding dives with mild currents. The islands in front of Candi Dasa—Tepekong, Gili Mimpang, and Gili Likuan—have an impressive variety of fish life, but the currents can be unpredictable.

Pemuteran Island is flanked by reefs, walls, a wreck and shallow coral gardens in clear waters.

Cemeluk, just off Bali's main east coast highway, is home to a prolific community of friendly fish, including damselfish, cardinalfish, black triggerfish, pyramid butterflies and yellowtail fusiliers. **Tulamben's Liberty Wreck** is known for its sociable

fish. Among other things, the World War I-era cargo ship houses spotted garden eels, goatfish, parrotfish, electric blue neon damselfish and hawkfish.

Menjangan Island (Deer Island), located just offshore from a mountainous point in northwestern Bali, offers fine diving for beginning and intermediate divers. The island's protected position keeps currents and waves to a minimum. Part of a protected reserve called Bali Barat National Park, Menjangan has craggy walls and grottoes populated by soft coral and gorgonians.

The Kangean Islands, off the beaten track, promise an unspoiled, one-on-one experience with nature. With saltwater crocodiles and unpredictable currents, this region offers advanced diving at its burliest.



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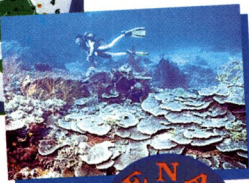
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Dive Profiles

JEAN-MICHEL COUSTEAU

From an Amazon odyssey to going down with the ship, this man brings a camera with him on all his water-bourne adventures.

by Susan Blanchet

It took only 27 seconds to sink. His official duty as sole occupant: to fire three remote camera switches attached to the hand rail and avoid being sucked in or dragged down by the torque effect of a sinking ship. While he found the descent to 50 feet gentle, the unexpected cacophony of an entire vessel suffering and cracking disturbed him. All in a day's work for Jean-Michel Cousteau as he produced the documentary, *Destroyer at Peace*, fulfilling a childhood dream at the same time.

"When you're left alone on a ship at 10:30 AM in the morning in your wetsuit with nothing to eat or drink and about 15 boats around looking at you like you have a disease, you realize to what extent a man alone is bad company. You start to talk to yourself," the French filmmaker said of his nearly seven-hour wait for the *Russian Destroyer #356* to sink. But in spite of the discomfort of the situation, he had always wanted to experience a sinking ship, ever since he was a little boy.

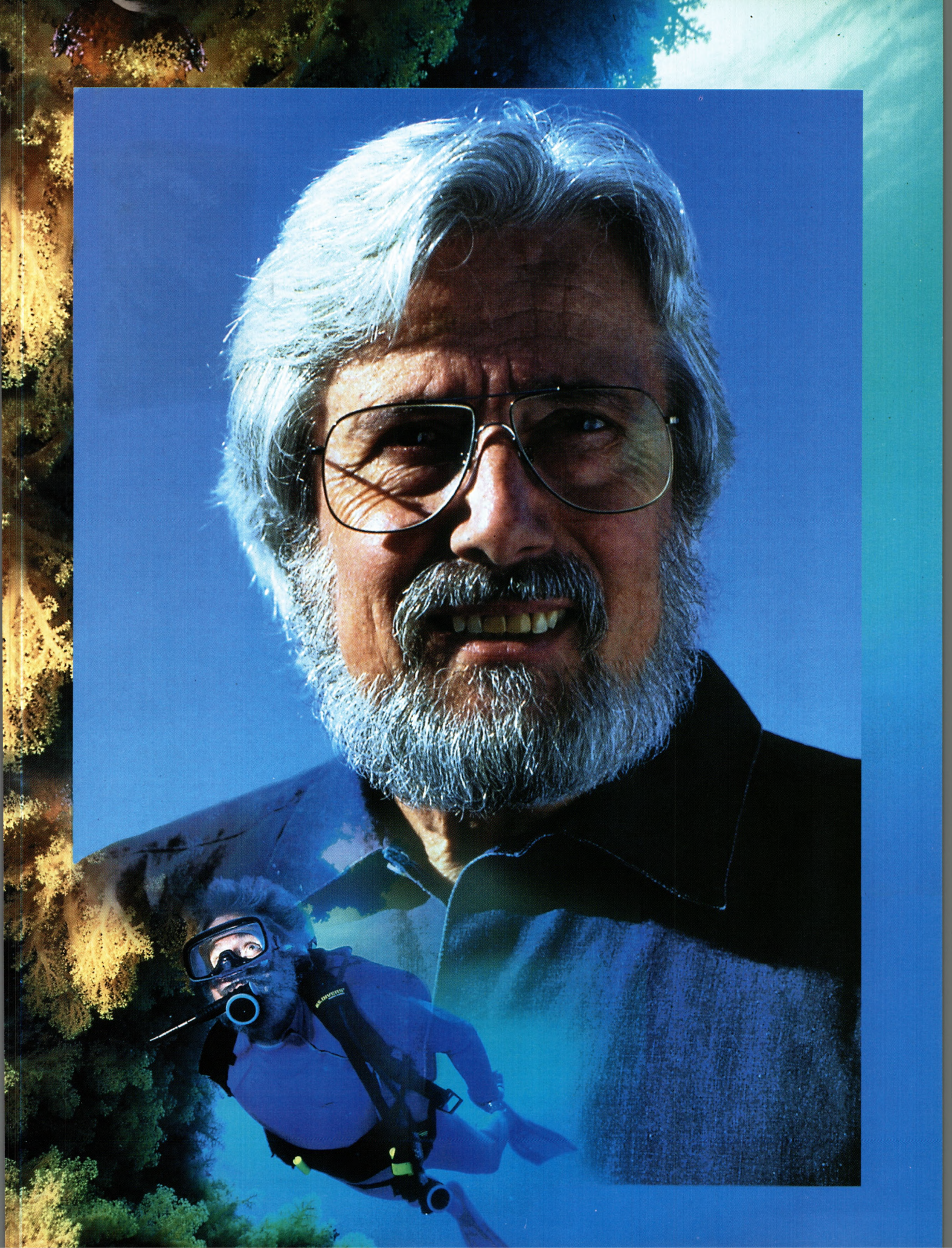
The childhood dream came from reading stories about captains going down with their ships during World War II. Although the young Cousteau had difficulty understanding the choice of the captains in those tales, he was curious, wondering what it would feel like to sink into the ocean with a wounded ship. In 1996, when a Russian Destroyer was to be scuttled in the waters off Cayman Brac as a dive attraction to take pressure off the reefs, Cousteau asked for and received permission from the Cayman government to go down with the ship, creating his own chapter in history.

But sinking with a retired Destroyer was just one of a handful of dramatic moments Cousteau has encountered while filming underwater, though he insists, with more than a touch of irony, that he hasn't had many dramatic things happen to him. "Nothing other than running out of air in a cave and having your life go by in less than half a second. And recalling everything you'd learned but never applied in a very short period of time and, of course, looking for your buddy," Cousteau quipped, referring to a dive when he traversed a narrow passageway and accidentally tripped his tank's "J" valve. On another occasion, while posing as a subject by an underwater cliff at 60 feet in the Cocos Islands, he and three film crew members were quickly swept to 140 feet in a descending current. Different water temperatures exacerbated conditions creating a low visibility mirage effect and they became tangled in the camera equipment and cables. Managing to get near the cliff, they inched their way up to safety.

Harrowing experiences, yet numbering few for a man who has spent a large portion of his nearly 60 years involved in ocean endeavors. Starting when Cousteau was seven, his family spent vacations heading from their home in Toulon, France to the country's southern Mediterranean waters to pioneer scuba diving. He recalls his parents' and younger brother Phillippe's early enthusiasm with "...adventure, discovery and a great deal of excitement. Nobody had any documents to be shared. It was all new."

The Cousteau family was forging a path without knowing it. For many of the discovery years, the entire family dove, including his mother, Simone. They called her "Bergere," the traditional title of the wife of a captain in the French Navy—it means "shepherdess" of *Calypso's* crew. Phillippe, as enthralled as Jean-Michel, created poetry and beautiful cinematography to express his link with the ocean realm. Jean-Michel's father, Jacques, was thrilled to be fulfilling some of his dreams while his family accompanied him.

Cousteau shared his father's talent, vision and passion, but he related to his father on another level as well. "I have the same curiosity and I've learned from him how to think horizontally, which really means being able to be an observer and make connections with things which may not appear to be connected," Cousteau reflects. "When I was very young, together with my brother, Father would take us out and show us the stars, the garden, talk



to us about plants and connect all of these things together, because in the end everything is connected."

Cousteau uses this technique when creating a documentary by filming information and subjects that don't appear associated at the onset, but relate in the finished product. His Peabody award winning film, *Cousteau's Amazon*, (not an ocean series), demonstrates this connection most profoundly because it was during the filming of that particular documentary that Cousteau clearly saw the connection between the water system and the land.

The origins of his prolific film career began in the mid-1960s when Cousteau started organizing the logistics for the television film series, *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*. He served as Executive Producer for *Jacques Cousteau: The First 75 Years*, Emmy award-winning *Cousteau/Mississippi*, and has been Producer or Executive Producer of 59 television specials, including the 39-part series, *Cousteau's Rediscovery of the World*. Several of the programs were nominated for Emmy or Cable Ace Awards.

In addition to cinematography, Cousteau uses an array of vehicles to reach out and enlighten the public with respect to ocean and planet preservation. Most recently he took Sarah, the Duchess of York, diving with Caribbean reef sharks. The

event was aired on national television last November—he hopes the program will reduce fear and bolster concern for the preservation of shark populations throughout the world. Since 1989, Cousteau's column, syndicated by the *Los Angeles Times*, has appeared regularly in over 70 newspapers worldwide. He lectures more than 100,000 students from all over the world each year and addresses industry groups

and forums. Leading educational field-study programs for over 25 years, he has developed programs for ecologically responsible diving and sensitivity to marine environments:

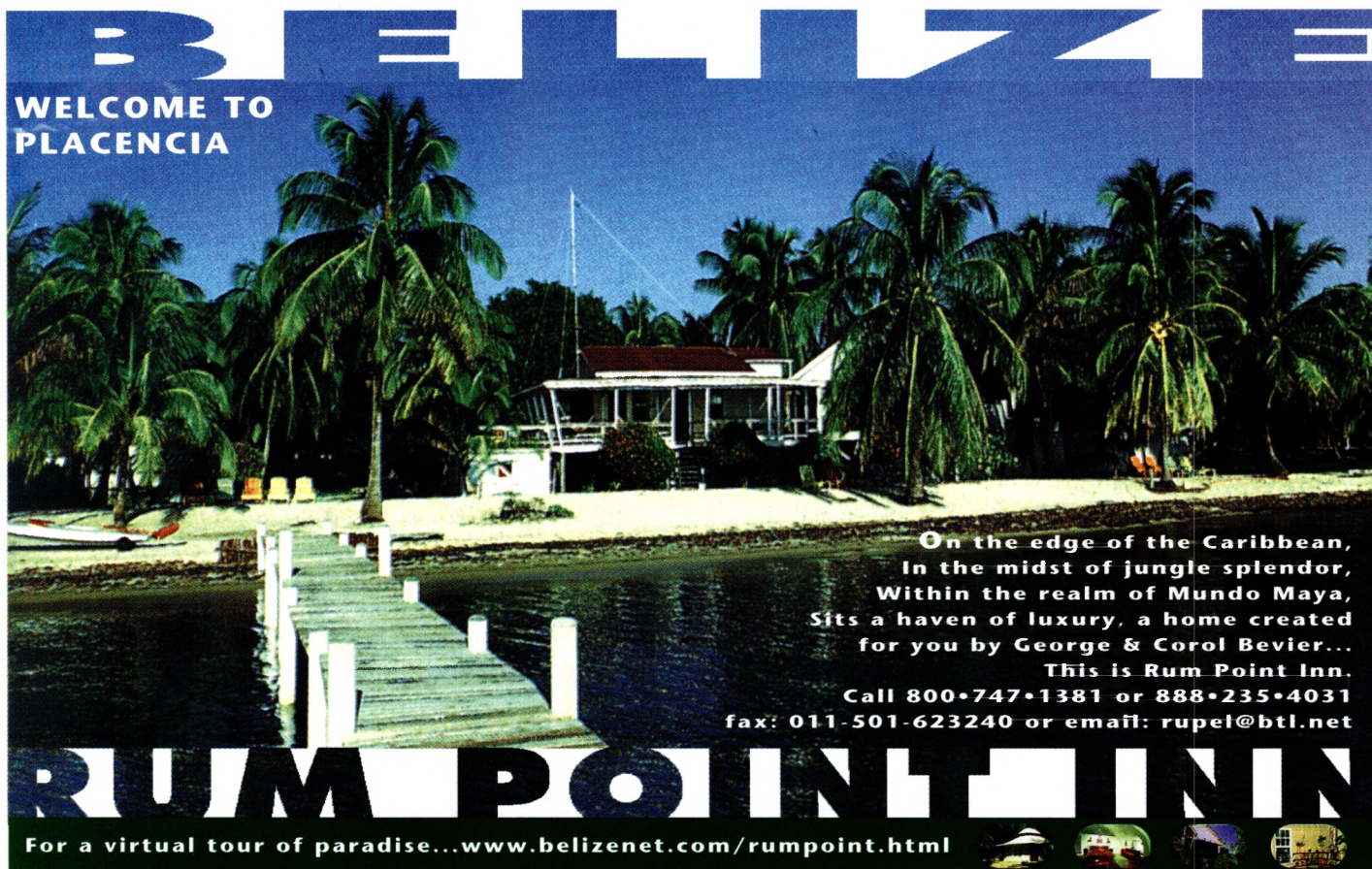
L'Aventure Jean-Michel Cousteau aboard *Aggressor* Fleet vessels, *Jean-Michel Cousteau's Out Islands Snorkeling Adventures* in the Bahamas, and *Project Ocean Search*. He also recently developed Jean-Michel Cousteau Fiji

Island Resort to demonstrate that eco-tourism is possible. "The creation of a resort in Fiji serves as a model to show that

you can be environmentally friendly and economically successful."

In recognition of his contributions, Cousteau was awarded an honorary Doctoral degree in the Humanities from Pepperdine University in 1976. Recently, he received the 1994 Dive Equipment Marketing Association Reaching Out Award, the 1995 NOGI award, the SeaKeeper Award and the John M. Olguin Marine Environment Award.

*"I've
learned how
to think horizontally...
how to make connections
with things which may not
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In 1988, when Jacques Cousteau was 78, his son planned a symbolic expedition. "I had the privilege to take the wind-ship *Alcoyne* to Papua New Guinea, which I knew very well. I'd been going there since 1973. I rendezvoused with my father, who came with *Calypto*. It was the first time the two ships met on expedition...and I invited him to join us in Papua New Guinea, a place which I knew and he did not. It was my way of returning what he had done for me for so many years—being my guide to different parts of the world, which he knew and I didn't. This time it was the other way around and for me it was very special."

Jacques Cousteau died on June 25, 1997. Four days after laying his father to rest near Bordeaux, France, Cousteau entered the Southern California coastal waters of Anacapa Island for a few minutes alone before a public event. Thanking the people for the unscheduled deviation, he told them, "Everybody looks up to the sky to say [my father] is in heaven...as far as I'm concerned, he's not up there, he's down there."

Cousteau entered the water under overcast skies, but as he submerged, "the sky opened up and the sun started shining in the middle of the kelp bed," he recalls. "I knelt down on the sand in the middle of the kelp. There were these sun rays going through this beautiful undersea forest which made me feel like I was in a cathedral and the closeness that you can have with people you care about and the environment that surrounds you, I don't believe can be equaled anywhere."

As a result of the tremendous interest and corporate offers to continue the environmental legacy of Jacques Cousteau,

he founded the Jean-Michel Cousteau Institute one month after his father's death. Cousteau says all divers share in his father's legacy and bear a responsibility because "they are the undersea eyes of humanity."

The non-profit institute is creating action partnerships with leading environmentalists and organizations around the world proposing solutions to business, industry and government. Its mission statement calls for a number of endeavors designed to "unite the world's peoples in a global effort to halt marine devastation." It calls for active participation, particularly among youth. Included are plans for the development and filming of several educational documentaries. The torch has been passed; the legacy will continue. Jean-Michel Cousteau isn't slowing down anytime soon. 

Want to Know More?

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- **Project Ocean Search**
Tel: 805-899-8899; Fax: 805-899-8898

- **Bahamas Out Islands Snorkeling Adventures**
Tel: 800-688-4752; Fax: 954-359-8098.

- **The Jean-Michel Cousteau Institute**
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Topside photo: Alexandra Bourdelon ;Underwater photo: Dennis Sabo

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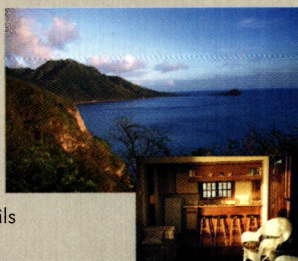
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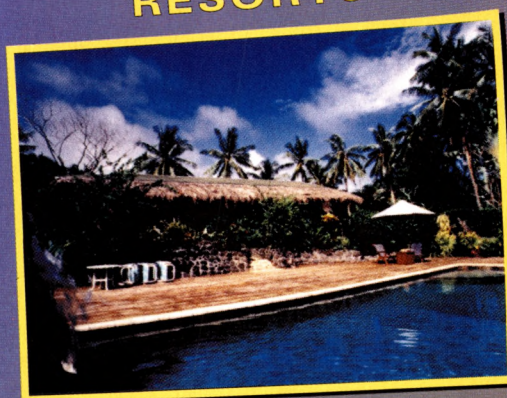


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Checking In

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Fax: (011 66) 76 270.818/832

Email: kamala@samart.co.th

Website: www.kamalabay.com

Nine small units lie on the shores of Kamala Bay, surrounded by forest. Guests enjoy the relaxed, remote experience, yet are still just 30 minutes from the airport and 15 minutes away from Phuket's nightlife center. Visitors have access to many beautiful beaches nearby, plus a private beach club on one of the least developed beaches, with water sports, volleyball, and dive shop.

Number of Rooms: 122, including Deluxe accommodations, Junior Suites and Executive Suites. All rooms have A/C, IDD phone, safe, minibar, hairdryer, refrigerator, TV and bathtub. Non-smoking rooms available on request.

Additional Services: In-house laundry, dry cleaning, internet facilities, 24-hour doctor, massage.

Recreation Facilities: Fitness center, tennis court, pool, beauty salon.

Restaurants: Three restaurants



offer three different atmospheres. **Dive Shop:** Yes, at the beach club. **Nearest Medical Facilities:** Patong Hospital, 15-minute drive. **Nearest Recompression Chamber:** Patong **Water Temperature:** 78–83° **Handicapped Facilities:** No **Transfers:** Yes **Average Package:** US\$600–700



This PADI-certified dive shop offers courses from Open Water through Divemaster, 2-tank scuba and snorkel charters to Desecheo Island, night dives and overnight trips to Mona Island. All of their dive equipment is brand new and so is their dive boat, *Katmandu*. It is the fastest—and probably the most comfortable and safest—on the west coast of Puerto Rico. As an added bonus, the *Katmandu* is

32-foot Bellecraft custom aluminum dive catamaran with twin 225 Mercury outboards. Equipped with toilet, freshwater shower, dive platform and ladder, 18 tank holders, full electronics, Epirb fire extinguishing system, life raft and 20 floatation devices, first aid kit and oxygen. US Coast Guard certified for 12 divers or 18 snorkelers. **Number of Instructors:** Two **Location:** Store with classroom

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often the only dive boat in sight. **Boats:** 1995

and dive boat are located right at Black Eagle Marina, only steps from each other.

Certifications: PADI

Medical Facilities: Hospital five minutes away, recompression chamber in San Juan.

Weather/Water Temperature: Normally sunny weather at 85°; water temperature is around 80°.

Quality and Type of Diving: Coral reefs, walls, caverns, pinnacles, abundant marine life, visibility 100+ feet, whales in the winter. **Cost:** Local 2-tank dive, \$45; Desecheo Island 2-tank trip, \$65; Night dive, \$55. (Add \$10 for equipment rental).

FROM THE FIELD

Aruba and Grand Cayman

The "Virtual Scuba School" offers the option of taking most of the PADI Open Water certification course at home on CD-ROM. Red Sail Sports estimates that it will take two to three days of instruction on Aruba or Grand Cayman to complete the course.

SOURCE: RED SAIL SPORTS;
(800) 255-6425 +++

Bonaire

The Foundation for the Preservation of Klein Bonaire fear that development on the tiny island will lead to irreparable damage to the island's reef, which is in shallow waters and close to the shore. A team from ReefKeeper International surveyed the reef in August, collecting photographs and data on coral species and their health conditions in the Bonaire Marine Park. ReefKeeper's report will be used as scientific documentation by the Foundation to support permanent preservation.

Checking In

vation of the reefs.

SOURCE: REEFKEEPER

INTERNATIONAL;

(305) 358-4600 +++

British Virgin Islands

This year, Baskin In The Sun on Tortola will offer a 7-day vacation package, beginning the night of Wednesday, August 12th, which is based around the annual coral spawning. Every year the coral spawn on a remarkably predictable basis—seven nights after the full moon in August. The package includes ten daytime dives, a night dive to get oriented to the area the night before the coral spawn, and a three-tank all night dive on August 15th.

SOURCE: CLAIRE ABREHART, BASKIN IN THE SUN; (284)

49-42858, FAX: (284)

49-44304 +++ Fiji Fiji,

which has been an independent state since 1970 and a republic since 1987, has recently elected to return to monarchical rule under Queen Elizabeth II. The official return to the monarchy will occur in July 1998. **SOURCE:**

GERMANY LIVE;

WWW.GERMANY-LIVE.DE

+++ Grenada The Flamboyant Hotel on Grand Anse beach has added 20 new units and a game room, and also

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Email: conchclub@aol.com

Website: www.bracilittle.com

Conch Club is the only luxury townhouse complex on Little Cayman, perched on 250 feet of untouched white sand beach. And their scuba partner, Reef Divers, is one of the top dive shops in the Caribbean. Dive in the world-famous Cayman waters—including the Bloody Bay Wall Marine Park—and dine nightly in one of the finest Little Cayman restaurants. Enjoy modern facilities, friendly staff and first-rate safety standards in the dive shop.

Accommodation: 40 rooms, all oceanfront units in tropical

decor. Each with fully-equipped kitchen, living and dining room. Pool, jacuzzi and dock on site.

Restaurants: The Bird of Paradise is located at Little Cayman Beach Resort, offering excellent buffet dining in an alfresco setting.

Dive Shop: Reef Divers offers PADI, NAUI and NASDS certifications. A full line of equipment is available for rent. The shop also has a freshwater rinse tank, showers and a dive gear storage area. The trips are made on PRO 42-foot Newton boats. Boats are

12.5 feet wide, and a new one just arrived.

HSA Certified: Yes

Courses: Open Water, Advanced, Full Certification, Nitrox, Rescue, Dive Master.

Medical Personnel: Cayman Brac

Nearest Recompression

Chamber: Grand Cayman

Weather/Water Temperature: Average air temperature is 80°; water temperatures range between 78-86°.

Packages: A three-tank dive package costs \$75.



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Located five minutes from the fabulous Bunaken Marine Garden, the four-star resort Hotel Santika Manado and the Thalassa five-star PADI Dive Center offer a comfortable and relaxing place to stay and dive.

Number of Rooms: 101 rooms and cottages, all with air conditioning, IDD phone, mini bar, TV, coffee/tea maker.

Other Amenities: Three pools, private beach (not for swimming), onsite laundry.

Restaurants: The Maleo Coffee Shop serves European, Chinese, Indonesian and local food. The Lion Fish Diver's Bar in the diving center offers snacks, light meals and drinks.

Dive Shop: Thalassa Dive Center can train divers up to the level of PADI Instructor. It has a fast, spacious, specially-designed dive boat. Guests do not have to carry, wash or store any equipment. A well-trained and licensed staff provides excellent service for guests.

Nearest Medical Personnel: 20-minute drive.

Nearest Recompression Chamber: 30-minute speed boat ride.

Weather/Water temperature: Tropical with rainy season from November to March; water temperature averages 78°.

HSA Certified: No

Transfers: Available between airport and hotel for US\$7; also free scheduled transfers run to City Center.

Other Activities: Highland tour, white water rafting, trekking, bicycling, beach volleyball.

Average Packages: Three nights, two dive days for US\$225 per person. Ten nights, nine dive days for US\$862 per person. Rates based on double occupancy.

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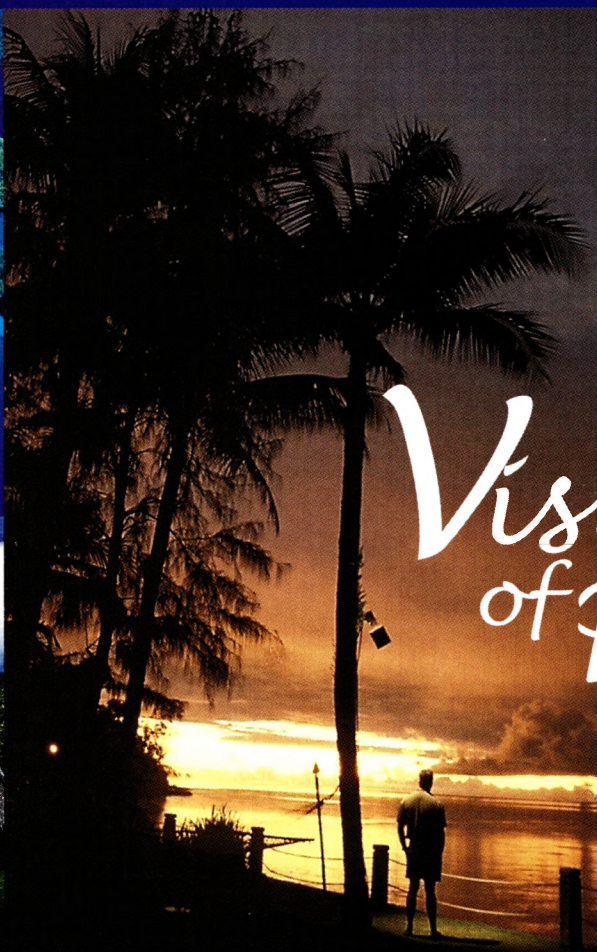
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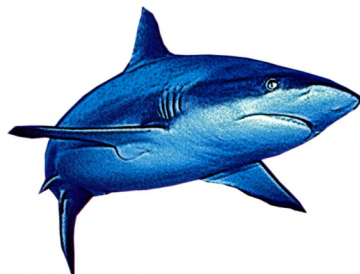
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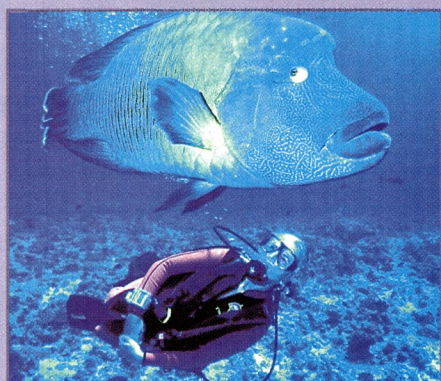


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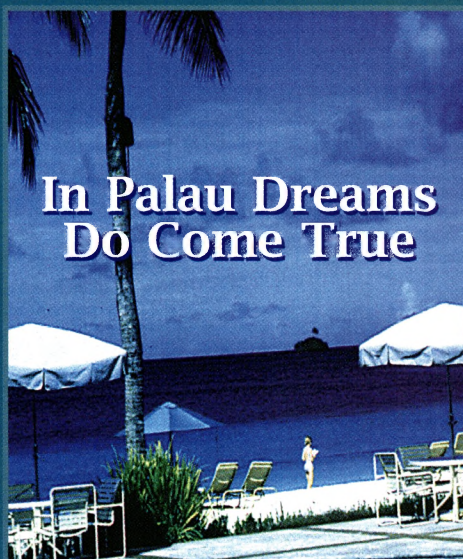
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Tenggol Aqua Resort

Malaysia

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23000 Kuala Dungun

Terengganu Darul Iman

West Malaysia

Phone: (011 60) 018 832.0560

Fax: (011 60) 9 844.4862

Email: ahadi@pc.jaring.my

Website: www.geocities.com/TheTropics/4222



Tenggol Aqua Resort is situated off Kuala Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia. The island resort is dedicated to nature and water lovers. Guests can relax and enjoy the completely unspoiled environment and an exquisite spectrum of marine life. Scuba dive around Tenggol Island, swim and snorkel in the crystal-clear lagoon. When you're ready for a break from total marine immersion, try jungle trekking, hill climbing or traditional deep sea fishing. A complete range of recreational and technical diving equipment is available. In addition to the outstanding reefs, a number of wrecks invite exploration.

Number of Rooms: Two units of bungalows, four units of terrace rooms, 16 units of semi-detached rooms.

Accommodations: The rooms are rustic and sparsely furnished; all have private bathrooms with hot showers and fans. The generator runs at night from 7:00pm till daylight. Rooms are available for double or triple occupancy.



Units are on the hillside and look out over the beach. VCR

and TV are available at the dive center. Most of the island's occupants are resort guests who enjoy the absolute privacy of the beach.

Restaurants: The operation caters buffet-style to the guests, and the main restaurant faces the bay. As Tenggol Aqua Resort is operated by muslims, no alcohol is offered on the island. However,



guests may bring their own from the mainland.

Transfer: By speed boat, transfers take about 45 minutes from the mainland.

Average Package Rates: Six days, five nights, diver: \$375, non-diver: \$184. Rates are based on double occupancy and include transfer from Kuala Dungun to Tenggol Island and back, accommoda-

tions, meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner and free-flowing tea, coffee and cookies), snorkeling equipment, snorkel trip to Turtle Point, and use of kayaks and canoes. Dive packages also include tanks, weight and weight belt, dive boat and dive guide. Night dives/dawn dives are an additional \$24 per dive.

Availability of dives depends on the tide. First check-out shore dive is compulsory. Please bring along your certification card or log book.

Dive shop: Fully equipped dive center, diving and transfer by speed boats, two 48-foot wooden fishing boats.

Instructors: One full-time instructor and two freelance instructors are available. A PADI Rescue Diver and one full-time divemaster are on the island.

Location: Located on the east coast of West Malaysia in the state of Terengganu. The main town fronting the island is Dungun, which has a jetty for the boat transfers. The island is surrounded by the South China Sea.

Certification: PADI courses are available from Open Water to Dive Master. Speciality courses and technical/Nitrox courses are also provided.

Nearest Medical Personnel: Dungun, on the mainland.

Nearest Recompression chamber: Kuantan Naval Base, about two hours away.

Weather/Water Temperature: Tropical weather year round; the monsoon (rainy) season runs from November through February. Water temperatures average in the mid-80's.

Quality and Type of Diving: Abundance of corals, exotic fishes and good visibility typify the dive sites at Tenggol Aqua Resort. Deep dives and current dives are one of the main activities that a diver will experience.

has begun to offer free use of snorkeling gear, pedal boats, and kayaks.

SOURCE: THE FLAMBOYANT HOTEL; (473) 444-4247

+++ Hawaii Looking for a chance to bond with graceful manta rays with 8-10 foot wingspans? Kona Coast Divers is offering a *Manta Ray Madness* night dive with the opportunity to visit some of the most gentle creatures in the sea. **SOURCE: KONA COAST DIVERS; (808) 329-8802 +++ St. Eustatius**

Beginning on January 1st, 1998, visitors to St. Eustatius will have access to The St. Eustatius Marine Park. The park will have 30 buoyed sites marking wrecks, reefs, canyons and drop-offs. Diving in the marine park will cost \$3 per dive or \$25 for five consecutive days of diving. Divers must be accompanied by local dive shop personnel to avoid risk of damage to historical artifacts. **SOURCE: JAN W.H. FABER, PRESIDENT OF THE ST. EUSTATIUS NATIONAL PARKS FOUNDATION; (011) 599-3-82661 +++**

Windward Islands Odyssey Expeditions, a nonprofit marine science program for high school and college students, is offering three educational journeys through the

Checking In

Windward Islands this summer. Students may earn PADI Open Water certifications, learn how to sail and participate in marine research during the 21-day trip. **SOURCE:**

JASON BUCHHEIM,
DIRECTOR OF ODYSSEY
EXPEDITIONS; (352) 527-3366 +++ General

Who used that rental gear before you and what exotic diseases were they carrying? Amoeba Scuba-Guard is a latex rubber cover that fits over the mouthpiece of a snorkel or regulator. Cost: \$2.95 each.

CasaCozumel, Inc. Cozumel

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Houston, TX 77284-0437
Phone: (800) 558.5145
Fax: (281) 856.7300
Email: vacation@casacozumel.com
Website: www.casacozumel.com

For travelers who shun the usual hotel experience, there is an alternative: condominiums. Wake up—undisturbed—at noon, walk out to the marketplace, then come back to your condo and prepare your own dinner, just the way you like it.

CasaCozumel is one of these alternatives where you can have just such an experience. CasaCozumel is easy to reach, with a US-based office in Texas and 24-hour phone service to assist you, should you need anything, during your stay in Cozumel. Although airport transports are not included,

there will be a representative at the airport, picking you up and showing your apartment to you. The privately owned villas and condos are all beachfront or in town, offering air conditioning, VCR and television, as well as fully equipped kitchens. CasaCozumel offers an onsite pool. Although there are no dive shops on site at CasaCozumel, the operation has contacts to dive shops and can inform divers about packages and prices. Casa Chac-Pool is a new in-town, two-house complex with pool. This facility

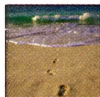


sleeps up to eight people for US\$21 p/p a night. Other prices (all for one week): During high season (December 15–April 15), a condo runs from US\$1155 to US\$2002. Low season (the rest of the year) condo prices are from US\$700 to US\$1099.

“CasaCozumel offers personalized vacations in homes. We customize vacations to fit a particular family or group,” says Dennette Whitaker Heredia, Sales Director for the operation. “We are like privacy in paradise.”



www.netizenislands.com



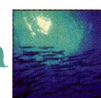
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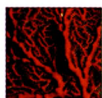
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Condumel, a small condominium resort, offers ten fully furnished, air-conditioned, one-bedroom, waterfront apartments. The condos feature large marble baths, fully furnished kitchens, ample bed and living rooms, hammocks, balconies or terraces, daily maid service and an unsurpassed sunset view over the Caribbean. The building is constructed in the Mayan style, and passersby as well as guests often stop to take pictures of the stone facade

and front garden. "Every little bit of the stone is carved and modeled, and there are huge plants growing in the front. I thought at first that it was the fancy villa of a Mayan-crazy rich guy," says a *Dive Travel* employee who recently visited Cozumel. On the nearby ironshore waterfront, excellent snorkeling is available. Many satisfied customers consider Condumel an ideal honeymoon retreat and a great relaxation spot. The operation is small

Condumel, Condominium Apartments Cozumel

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Cozumel, Q. Roo
Mexico
Phone: (011 52) 9 872.0101/3101
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Email: dive@aquasafari.com
Website: www.aquasafari.com

enough to provide friendly personal service and to take care of the guests. Hotel operator Bill Horn is actually a dive instructor who specializes in making diving and fishing enthusiasts happy. Rates: Until April 15, 1998: US\$108 per night + 12% tax. From April 16 to December 15, 1998: US\$85 per night + 12% tax. Diving in Cozumel: The wall and drift diving in Cozumel is world famous and with the 80–85° water, you'll be able to dive and snorkel to your heart's content.

SOURCE: PUDGE CORPORATION;
(800) 887-8343 +++
PADI has added new material to its underwater photography course, making it suitable for both novice photographers and intermediates who want more advanced techniques. **SOURCE: KEVIN YOUNG AT PADI;**
(800) 729-7234

.....
OOPS! In the last issue of Dive Travel, we goofed on a Checking In entry—Pan Borneo Divers' website address is www.jaring.my/panborn. Sorry!

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(Periplus Travel Guide
Underwater Indonesia, pg 185)

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Most of Vietnam's coastal underwater resources are virtually unknown and have never been surveyed in any systematic way, but all of that will change this year. Project Ocean Quest will mount a three-part scientific expedition to survey and document the marine environment off the entire coast of Vietnam—a coastline of approximately 900 miles, about the same as the coast of California. A big job, but POQ will engage the services of more than 30 scientists and interns including such oceanic luminaries as Dr. Sylvia Earle and Jean-Michele Cousteau...and TWO *Dive Travel Magazine* subscribers!

The initial phase will explore the northern reaches of the Gulf of Tonkin, beginning in Cat Ba National Park, Hai-Phong, Ha-Long Bay and including the Co-To and Chang Tay Islands. The final phase will focus on the south—Phu-Quy Island off Phan-Thiet province, the small islands of the Truong-Sa archipelago, the Con-Dao Islands, and around the southern tip of the country into the Gulf of Thailand. Phase two will explore the central part of the country, the Paracel archipelago, Da-Nang (formerly known as China Beach), Nha-Trang and the islands of Hon-Mun, Hon-Tre and Hon-Khoi.

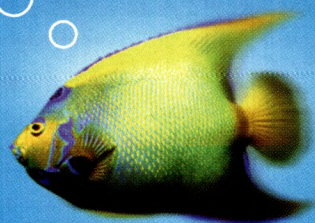
Here's where you come in: Two places have been reserved on a live-aboard expedition of three weeks for two **lucky winners** of the *Dive Travel* drawing. The winners will be provided with accommodations, transfers, visas, free film for underwater photos and free T-shirt acknowledging their participation in the project. Sorry, airfare is not included. Contest winners will be working members of the team, must be certified divers and will also have an opportunity to visit cultural and historic sites in Vietnam. This may not be for everyone, but for two lucky individuals, it could be a dream of a lifetime.

The contest is open to *Dive Travel* subscribers only. All entries must be received no later than March 15, 1998 to be eligible. All contestants must be at least 21 years of age. The prize is non-transferable. Winners will be selected by a random drawing and will be notified by April 1, 1998. Prize winners must respond to *Dive Travel Magazine* by April 6, 1998, or an alternate winner will be selected.

To enter, mail in your subscription label or new subscription order marked VIETNAM to: *Dive Travel Vietnam Contest*, 500 Seabright Avenue, Suite 203, Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

Or, enter electronically on our website: www.divetravel.com

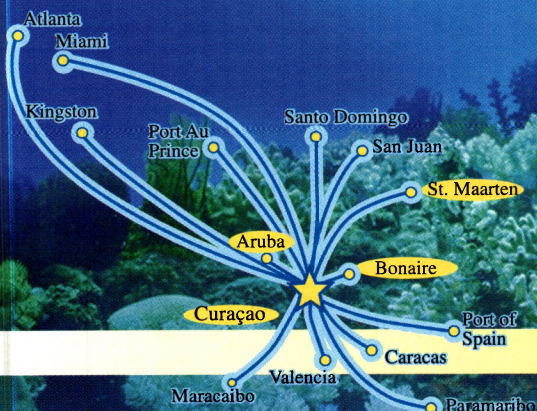
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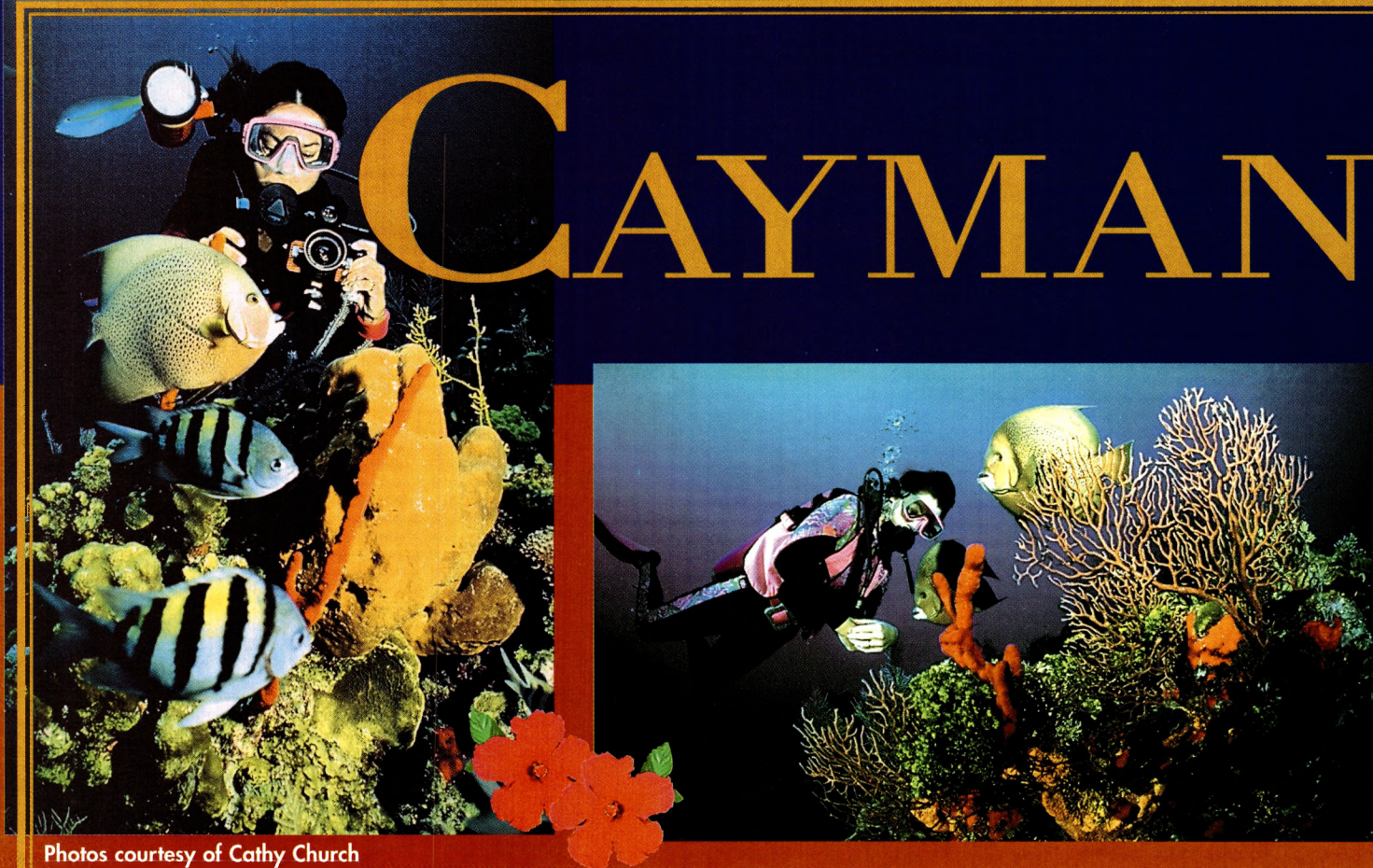


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Photos courtesy of Cathy Church

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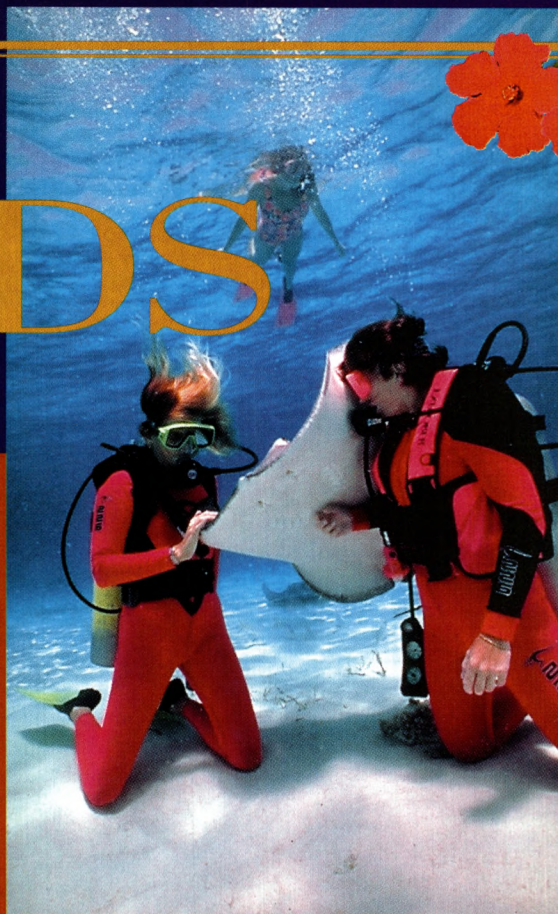
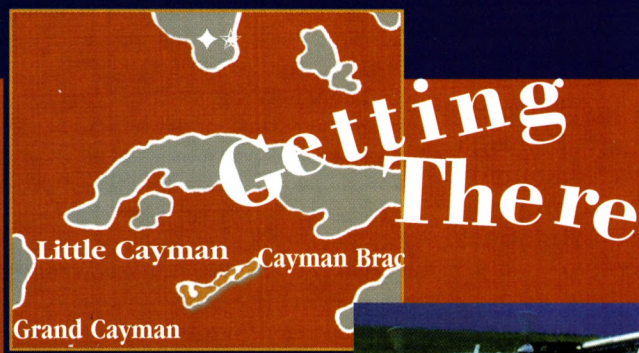
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Photos courtesy of Cathy Church

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1998 IN

Bittersweet. Dipping back into Cozumel reveals the the usual trappings of a modern dive vacation paradise in transition. Here are a few pointers to find what's best, what's worth discovering, what's worth revisiting and above all, what's new this year in Mexico's Caribbean paradise for divers. *By Susan Wilkink*

Ask anyone in the biz—there is no better dive value today than Cozumel, the lovely Mexican isle off the coast of the Yucatan peninsula. A hopper flight from international hubs like Miami and Houston; a currency flaccid enough to make anyone with dollars lightheaded; and a dive community competitive enough (104 dive “operators” on last count!) to make any diver feel like Scarlett O’Hara surrounded by gracious gentlemen, offering up two tanks in lieu of mint julep.

These include the likes of Bill Horn of Aquasafari, a regular fixture of San Miguel’s down-

what remains consistent and intriguing about diving in Cozumel.

Probably the most widely debated issue has been the increased use of enriched air on the island. The political background begins with the name of John Flynn, a cheeky gringo who decided to trademark the use of the word Nitrox in Mexico as the starting point for his company, Nitrox Solutions.

As the demand for Nitrox grew, Flynn’s chief competitor, the company that had always provided regular air fills on the island, began to explore enriched air—but as yet has not been able to officially use the word Nitrox on his version of the bright yellow tanks.

Both operators claim their method of filling superior—certainly seeing the spic-and-span facilities of Nitrox Solutions gives divers some reassurance about the air they breath.

Matters get even more interesting when you talk to the operators. Cesar Zepeda of Caribbean Divers is a complete convert to the stuff. “It’s perfect for a place like Cozumel,” he says.

If there was ever a prize for a diver’s paradise-slash-great place to party, it would have to go to Cozumel. Operators must stay vigilant to recognize divers with a substantial blood alcohol level, and the kind of fatigue that results from not enough sleep and too many late nights at the Hard Rock Café. It’s a condition that can be dangerous underwater. Zepeda feels that

diving Nitrox helps mitigate the risk. “Look, if you stay within the regular air tables, but dive with enriched air, you’re not only safe, it’s also better for you if you’re tired, or out of shape, or older, or have even a touch of alcohol in your system.” And if you’re wondering whether Nitrox has a beneficial impact on an exhausted hombre’s potency, don’t expect more than a grin and a shrug. Even the suggestion should be enough to land Nitrox at the top of the popularity polls in Cozumel.

I gave it a try myself, but after getting caught up in the drift and in gazing at the bounty of marine life around me, I discovered I was pushing my own depth limits to the very max. Nitrox is a new breath of fresh air, to be enjoyed with caution. For shallow dives, it’s tops for stretching your bottom time. But remember, when you step beyond the limits, you enter the very unattractive realm of oxygen poisoning—in no way an improvement over the bends that you would experience on regular air.

It will be interesting to see how many enriched air tanks are filled over the next coming months. Nitrox Solutions has been doubling and tripling their records on a monthly basis, both in training and in fills.

More Trends...From Nitrox to All-Inclusive

A good place to monitor this trend might be in the new watersports operation managed by Nitrox Solutions at the Club Isla de Cozumel, the very latest contender in the all-inclusive battle. Cozumel has seen the light in the all-inclusive vacation experience. After the success of such diverse properties as the Diamond Resort, the Crown Princess and the Melia Paradisus with their all-food, all-activities and all-entertainment recipe (though diving is usually extra), other hotels are considering this as an option, and several others are in the works as well. The

A French Angelfish seems to ponder the future of Cozumel developments.

town scuba culture for over 20 years, and Pico Castillo of Dive Paradise, a partner and the long-established company’s resident marine biologist. A conversation with them, or any of the up-and-comers like Nitrox Solutions, Caribbean Divers, and Dive Palancar reveals the essence of

Some Cozumel Stats....

On latest count, Cozumel has 104 registered Dive "Operators" vying for your business • Cozumel is only one small portion of the extensive Great Maya Barrier Reef which runs

proximity of the Club Isla to the southern reefs, and its new facilities, will make this a very interesting choice for some time...at least until the next all-inclusive mushrooms on one of the remaining spits of coastline.

Probably the opposite experience to the all-inclusive, more and more condominiums are in development on the island. While the majority of these are still in the Northern

If there was ever a prize for a diver's paradise-slash-great place to party, it would have to go to Cozumel.

Hotel Zone of the island, several more are in the works. For those with a consistent hankering for Cozumel, it might be a good idea to consider investing in a condo. If you're traveling with a family, condos

are a great way to cut costs by doing your own cooking. Lots of folks who have made this experience an important part of places like the Cayman Islands wouldn't want to travel any other way. (Two places offering condominiums in Cozumel can be found in "Checking In" on pages 42-43.)

Not to be outdone, hotels are increasing their profile using some interesting methods. The Fiesta Inn added karaoke, which draws a local and non-local crowd. Others have been actively promoting their services via the Internet—the Hotel Villablanca, with its lush grounds, rounded archways and floating white curtains that seem reminiscent of the days when knighthood was in flower, even announces its web site and email address above the doorway to the reception area. Bill



The Harbor on the edge of the Northern Hotel Zone is a limestone encased jewel, perfect to avoid the crowds and enjoy the sunset.

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Horn of Aquasafari observes that whoever answers the email of a potential customer first will most likely see that person on one of their boats. (Several Cozumel operators can be found at *Dive Travel Online* as well, www.divetravel.com). A downtown spa (which also operates on-site at the Diamond) even offers a Diver's Dream package which includes Eucalyptus Sport Massage, Lemon Salt Glow, and Peppermint Scalp Massage, all for \$82.50 (unfortunately far more than a day of diving).

An Insider's Calendar of Diving Highlights

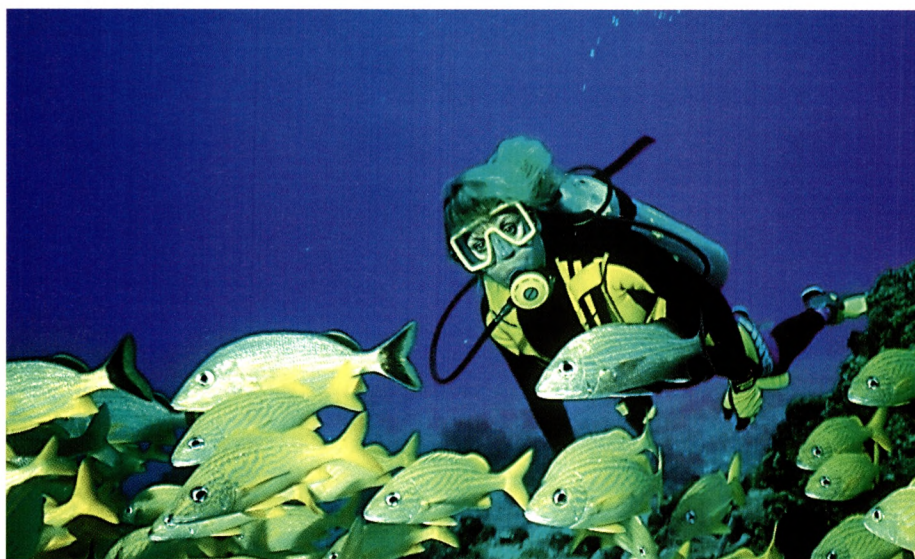
While more hotels and creative marketing will mean wider service and even better prices (remember supply and demand?), it also inevitably means more people. Even on the quieter north shore, with its stately hotels and natural sand beaches, there is talk of an additional cruise ship pier. More people, more snorkelers, more duty free. So what will this mean for the diving?

No one is quite sure. So it's a safe guess to hit the diving in Cozumel either in the off-season or in odd-hours. Some terrific seasonal ideas come from Bill Horn and Pico Castello. Horn suggests the following highlights for determining your year in Cozumel:

- Lobster migration in the winter
- Dolphins announcing the windy weather by heading south
- Dorado in the spring
- Sailfish and marlin in the spring and early summer
- Turtles in the summer and early fall.

Castello adds that the best time to see turtles all over the reefs is when they come to lay eggs on the beaches, from June to September. To see the ever-elusive seahorse, come by in the months of April and May, and dive the reefs off the Hotel Barracuda,

where they tend to congregate. There have been reported sightings consistently over the last few years. Another highlight needs some attention to the lunar, as well as Gregorian calendar: in the second week, after the last full moon in September, around 10:00 at night, you can catch the *big night* for corals. On this special night they release their eggs and sperm into the water in a synchronized festival of reproduction. Fortunately, they aren't shy about it—a bonus for divers who can witness this spectacular highlight of the natural world.



Steve Rosenberg



Susan Wilmsink

The components of a dive getaway: fair prices, quick flights, palapa-shaded beaches (left) and tremendous drift diving (top). And all of it can be researched on the much-touted Internet, as immediately visible on the Hotel Villablanca (above).

- Mexico has some 14,000 recorded sites with edifices built by the ancient Maya, many of them in close distance to Cozumel (and even some on the island), all within the culturally rich Yucatan peninsula.

This should serve as a handy guide in a year like this one. Last fall's El Niño was extremely mild and a record low for the number of Caribbean hurricanes, although Cozumel has always been pretty lucky in that regard. Once on-island for one of these migratory or reproductive spectacles, Castello suggests some beach dives to help avoid the gangs at Santa Rosa or Palancar. Since Dive Paradise opened its new facility on the beach at the Hotel Villablanca—complete with an umbrella-shaded terrace, oceanfront taquería, and the languid tones of Mexican ranchero music—Castello has been able to thoroughly explore the reef about 30 feet from shore. It is one of the few places you can definitely see orange-ball anemones and plenty of octopi at night. I don't know what the drift is like here, but last year I ran into plenty of divers who enjoyed drifting

along shore and then waddling their way into taxis to make the trip back.

Castello suggests two other options as well:


The best time to see turtles all over the reefs is when they come to lay eggs on the beaches from June to September.

To see the ever-elusive seahorse, come by in the months of April and May.

Chankanaab, where you can spy huge schools of tarpon nestled into the nooks and crannies of the tunnels of this underwater park, and Caleta (The Harbor), where most dive operators keep their boats overnight. This also happens to be a lovely place for a stroll with your honey. Home to the island's most picturesque lighthouse—a cross of the Moorish and Mayan in its limestone

arched splendor—and definitely the place to see large yachts and barely bustling tackle shops.

Sunsets are where it's at in Cozumel—it's not only from shore. Two-tank twilight dives that stretch from the afternoon into the night are a languid way to spend the late-day diving. Not always on the menu, but certainly a way to avoid the crowds, ask about them when you get there. It's also a fascinating time to see to a change of shifts underwater, when the day munchers are replaced by their nocturnal colleagues. While it is still light enough in the afternoon to explore without a flashlight, it's best to take one along to better see resting nurse sharks and reinvigorate the more vibrant pockets of reef.

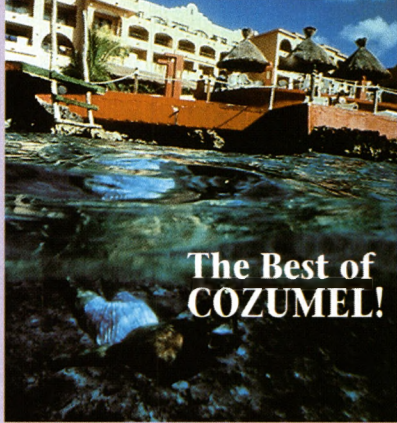
Back on board, sway under the stars and final rays of sunlight until your final dive. You might even be lucky enough to hear someone like Zepeda strum his guitar and give his rendition of everything from Cat Stevens melodies to Mexican folk canciones. That, after all, is what diving in Cozumel is really all about, isn't it? 



Steve Rosenberg

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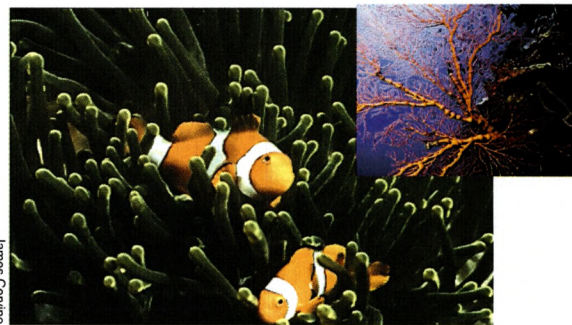
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REEF CLUB ISLA COZUMEL

This new dive operation on the premises of the *Reef Club Isla Cozumel* is managed by the team behind Nitrox Solutions and Sand Dollar Sports. A highly professional group, they have been a leading provider and training facility for enriched air on the island. They have also spent many years with divers of all levels, shapes and sizes in their capacity as primary dive operators for cruise ship guests.

All of this experience is brought to the table in their new outlet at the *Reef Club Isla Cozumel*. The focus is on great service, so all you have to do is dive. *Reef Club Isla Cozumel* is on the northern end of the island, close to some of its most spectacular reefs.

The company runs five boats, ranging from 23 feet, carrying 6 passengers, to 48 feet, carrying 25 passengers. Their proximity to the reefs means shorter travel times and more hours in the water. And Reef Club's



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wide range of experience means that you will enjoy yourself, no matter what level you're diving or snorkeling.

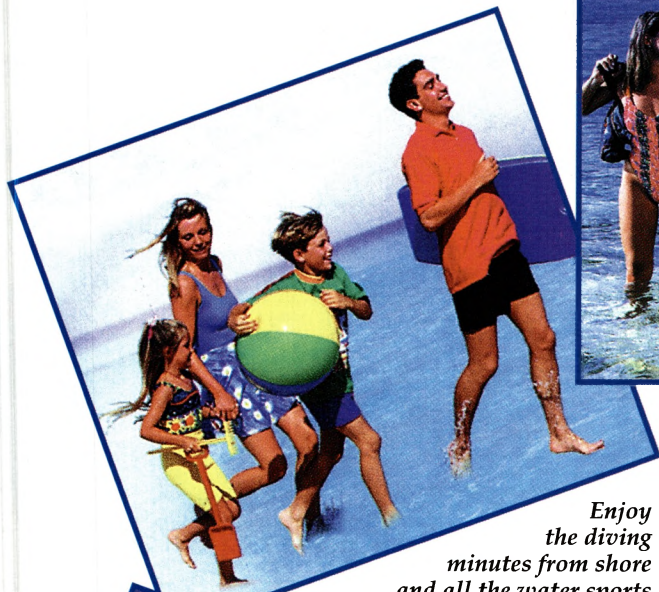
THE RESORT

Club Isla Cozumel's sparkling, new 240 rooms, are all designed with a light and airy Mexican-Caribbean flavor. Rooms have a view of either the ocean or the garden, air conditioning, one king-size or two double beds, a terrace, satellite television, phone and full bath. All the amenities of home with two significant differences: a pair of on-site restaurants serving different menus, an international buffet for casual dining, and a more formal dining experience. For those between-meal urges, there's the snack bar and grill by one of the two pools.

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THE DIVING

Cozumel's sea life is plentiful and exquisite. The deep yellow and blue of Spanish hogfish visiting a cleaning station. The flashing black and white of schooling sergeant majors. The silent croak of a toadfish hidden in a reef

crevice. The soft mauve of a featherduster worm brushing the base of orange and pink sponges. Even if you end up at the same dive site more than once, there's always something new and exciting to see. And for those truly seeking something different, check out the freshwater cave diving in the island's interior. While the Yucatan is known for its *cenotés* (underwater caverns), it's a lesser known fact that Cozumel has them, too. Wait no longer. Whether it's your first trip here, or your twelfth, the Reef Club Isla Cozumel will take care of your vacation. Clean, professional and accommodating, they will help you make the most of your days in Cozumel.

MORE ABOUT COZUMEL...

A coral island, Cozumel lies a mere 19 miles from the tropical-holiday hubbub of Cancun. Several airlines and charter flights can get you there, and the unique geography of Cozumel

means the waters of the Caribbean circulate around its coastline continuously. Translation? Ample currents, and abundant marine life on one of the Caribbean's largest expanses of coral reef. It also means great visibility, and lots of rollicking drift dives.

The languid warm days, the afternoon siestas, the night dives where you can glimpse the mysterious antics of the reef's nocturnal residents. Or, after a day of water and sun, catch some terrestrial night action—dancing, first-class dining or quietly stargazing from an empty beach, either way, you'll never forget it.

—Clara Weygandt

advanced Nitrox, and Nitrox instructor.

Specialty dive classes include deep diving, night, drift, boat, underwater naturalist, navigation and cavern—to name just a few.

If you're not a diver, or if you're a diver seeking a bit of variety in your vacation, or if you're traveling with a family or mixed crew—everyone wants to do something different—that presents no problems. There's snorkeling, sailing, wind-surfing, kayaks, horseback riding, tennis, a game room and gym, and it is all part of the all-inclusive package.

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Reef Club Isla Cozumel

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Nitrox Solutions/Sand Dollar Scuba: 1-888-SDSMEXX or contact a favorite dive travel specialist.

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Email: sds@cozumel.com.mx

Website: Coming Soon!

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Number of Boats: 5

Number of dives per day: 8 possible

Number of night dives: 2 daily

Rental equipment: Yes

Certification classes: Yes, from open water to Nitrox instructor
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Specialty classes: yes

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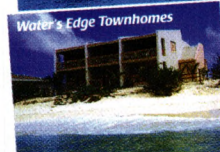
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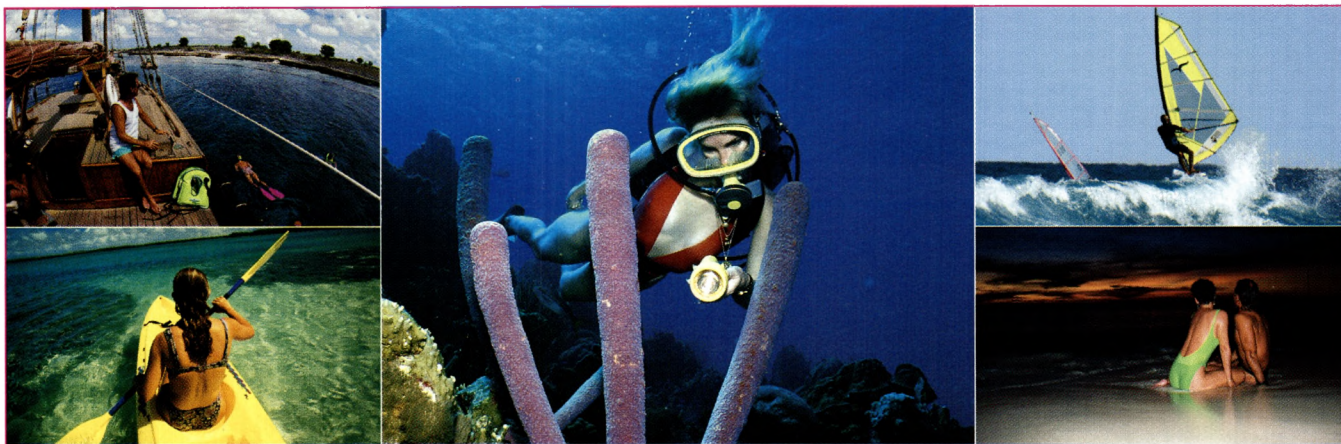
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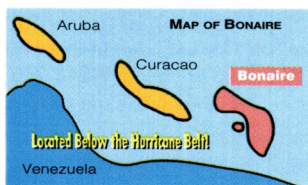
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Ocean Eye

DALE SANDERS



Although born and raised far from the sea in British Columbia's northern interior, Dale Sanders always knew that someday his life would revolve around the ocean. He bought his first scuba gear and became certified while still in high school, studied marine biology in college, and later spent a few years as a dive-master and instructor on Grand Cayman where he began to learn the art of underwater photography. On a dive trip to the north end of Vancouver Island, shortly after returning from the Caribbean, Sanders discovered that some of the most spectacular underwater wilderness areas in the world exist right in his figurative backyard. The discovery inspired him to produce a book called *The Emerald Sea—Exploring the Undersea Wilderness of the Pacific Northwest*. He hopes the book will call attention to the need to preserve this pristine underwater environment.

Most of his work is marketed internationally by MASTERFILE, a Toronto-based stock agency, and Sanders spends much of his time traveling to capture images for both the agency and a wide variety of publications.



Above: A pair of juvenile spotted dolphins on the Little Bahama Banks.
Left: An orange decorator crab hides beneath crimson anemones.

Ocean Eye

DALE SANDERS

MY SYSTEM:

I have done virtually all of my underwater work on a battered fleet of Nikonos II's and III's, mostly using the Nikonos 15mm lens. This is an awesome lens, ideal for large subjects like dolphins and whales, yet its close focusing ability and depth of field enables me to capture smaller subjects as well, in cracks and crevices where a larger housing can't go. Nonetheless, I am currently working on getting my Canon EOS system that I use topside into an underwater housing, but the process has been frustrating since most underwater housing manufacturers still insist on only making housings for Nikons. I am looking forward to working with it, particularly with the wide-angle zooms and for macro work. For strobes, I use old Sea&Sea US 150's that have served me well for years, but I am tempted by some of the newer TTL units.



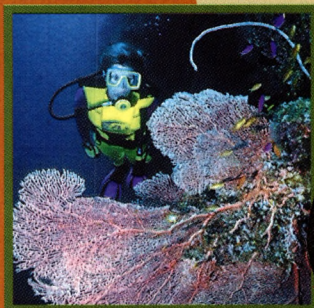
Above: A close encounter with a large manta in Revilla Gigedo Islands.

Right: An orca spy-hopping near the San Juan islands with Mt. Baker visible in the background.

Opposite: A wolf eel and a tiger rockfish share the neighborhood in Campbell River, British Columbia.

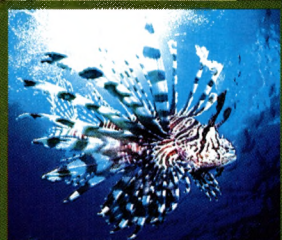






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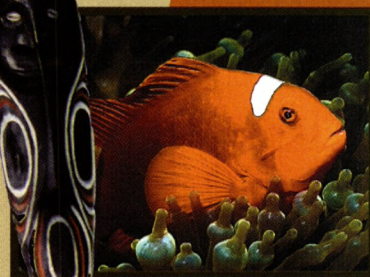
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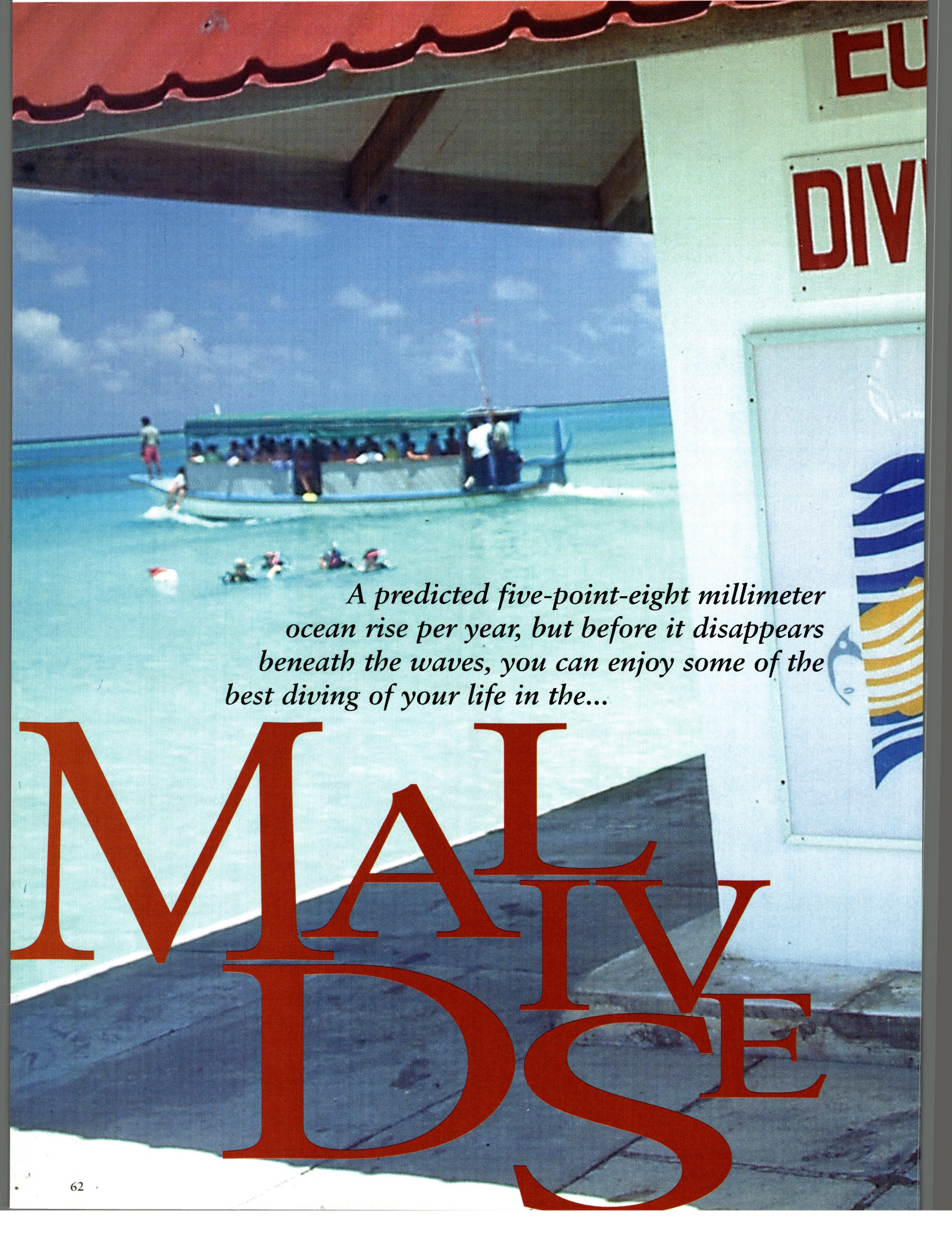
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A photograph of a tropical beach scene. In the foreground, a white building with a red roof is partially visible. A sign on the building reads "EU" and "DIV". Below the sign is a poster featuring a blue and yellow striped fish. In the middle ground, a blue boat with a green canopy is filled with people. Several divers are visible in the turquoise water. The sky is blue with some clouds.

*A predicted five-point-eight millimeter
ocean rise per year, but before it disappears
beneath the waves, you can enjoy some of the
best diving of your life in the...*

MALIV DSE

KUDDING
SCHOOL

1 9 9 7

V I S I T

M A L D I V E S

Y E A R



Photo: John Newman

BY ARYN KELLY



Bannerfish splash black and yellow across a Maldivian reef (left); three generations of colorfully clad Ungooaaruu women near the doorway of their home (below); a lone *dhoni* heads into the blue expanse of North Malé Atoll (opposite).

Standing on the tarmac, even the acrid waves of jet exhaust cannot cover the immediate scent of the sea. Warm blankets of atmospheric ocean hover close to the thin crusts of earth like a low fog, gently invading with each breath, shocking, abrupt and wonderful. No forcefulness to the smell, just an embrace of saline weight permeating the air. An odor of influence, entrancing—an exotic charmer sinuously sounding his wooden flute, beckoning to his will. The scent hangs in the thickness of the night air, and coats my lungs with a sense of how surrounded by ocean I am, and how remote from any sizable leftovers of Gondwanaland.

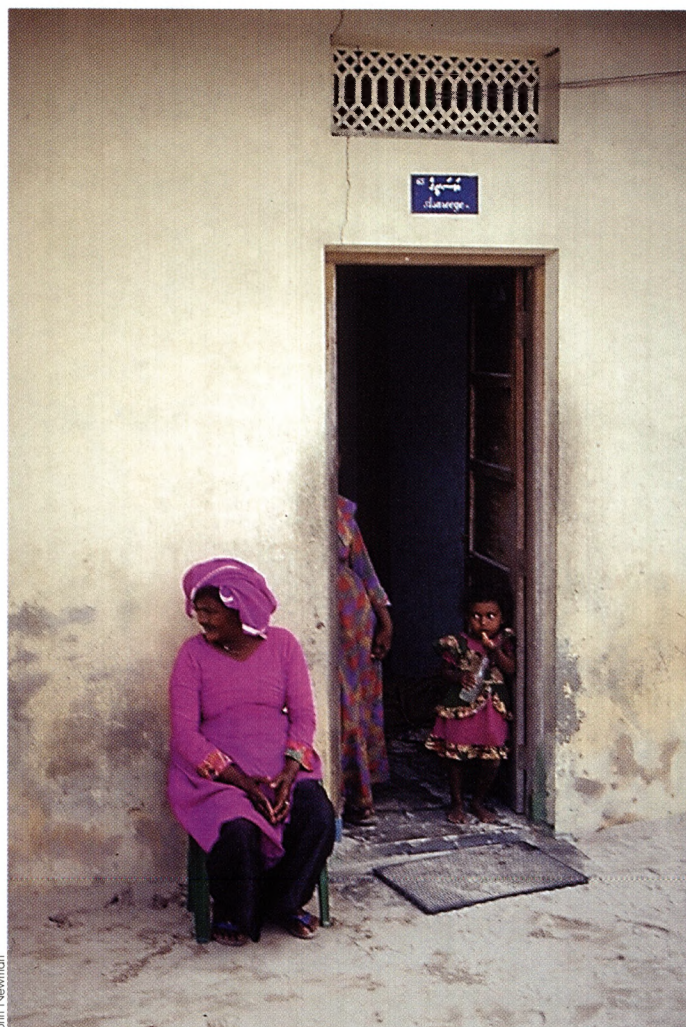
The moist air, such a contrast from the sterile dryness of cabin pressure, declares how alive this place is. Beyond the winding down of the jet engines and the many spouting voices, the night is quiet...no waves crashing in the distance, no birds or crickets or cars polluting the silence. And then a soft plundering of the runway with thick drops of fresh rain, jockeying to maintain a presence in the vastness of saltwater. Along with the scruffy asphalt, the stairs-on-wheels leading down from the jet, the travel-weary passengers and the unseen but scented sea, the gently sloping arc of palmwood marking an international threshold darkens with the warm wetness and declares, in straight-backed, simply engraved letters, "Welcome to Maldives."

نعمت المؤمنين وفتح قريب
الله

Situated nearly 400 miles south of the southern tip of India, 26 atolls comprised of over 1,000 tiny islands make up the Republic of Maldives. Thin slivers of land barely breaking the surface, the islands seem to have been flung out into the deep Indian Ocean from a brush wet with earth rather than paint. Aligned in a slender column, the islands adopt all manner of shapes, yet none peak higher than eight feet above sea level, and most can be circumnavigated on foot in less than an hour. A small Islamic nation, Maldives is home to about 250,000 people inhabiting only 202 of the 1,192 islands and revolves around two main industries, fishing and tourism.

Stretching across the equator in a north/south strip 469 miles long and 73 miles wide, only 0.4 percent of the country is dry land. More than any other nation, the world's flattest country entwines with the sea.

نعمت المؤمنين وفتح قريب
الله



The airport parking lot is not a vast expanse of asphalt marked up by strips of white and yellow, rather it is a wooden deck running in the same direction as the single runway, lined with a menagerie of tethered boats bobbing in the soft swell of the ocean. Out of the air and onto the sea, the transfer away from the island airport is awash with warm plunks of rain soaking through clothes worn for too many hours and onto skin thirsting for the moisture. The whirr of twin engines covers the silence, and wind-swept speed belies the stillness of night, whipping hair strands and shirt sleeves. Under cover of





Getting briefed before heading out to Banana Reef in North Male Atoll (above); soft coral flourishes throughout the islands (opposite top); school children at Ungoofaaru take a break from class work (opposite bottom).

freshly thatched roof, the walk down the dock reveals swarming fish just under the surface of the lagoon—somehow clear turquoise even at one twenty-seven in the morning.

Endemic vegetation, coconut palms and spidery banyan trees, meshes with imported landscaping, creating a lushness intensified by the tropical rain and unrivaled by any memory I can recall. The moon beats full in a night sky foreign to the other side of the world—still dark, still star-speckled, but much bigger. Tiny yellow-green geckos emerge for the downpour and scamper across the dampened walls of the guestrooms, unbeknownst to the sleeping inhabitants. Translucent inch-long anti-gravity five-fingered delicate beasts with oilspot eyes—they run from human company as if over hot coals.

نفرین الومیت وفتح قریب
الله

Once, the people of Maldives were troubled by a terrible *jinni*, Rannamaari. The demon would rise each month from the sea and claim a virgin maiden sacrifice. One month, an Arab holy man from Morocco called Abul Barakaath, offered to go in the girl's stead to the sacrificial temple. Seated, calm in the face of disaster, Abul Barakaath began to recite verses from his holy book, the Koran. The *jinni* rose up from the sea, wild and ravenous, but when he heard the powerful words, he sank beneath the sea and never again ravaged Maldives. The sultan, upon hearing the story, converted immediately to Islam, and his subjects did the same. This was in 1153, and though this history may be thick with legend, the mausoleum of Abul Barakaath on the capital island of Malé is greatly venerated.

Slender, lithe and completely without the bulky clumsiness of Westerners, native Maldivians are easily given to smiling. Wiry black hair, traditionally cropped short on men and grown long on

women, is straight and very thick. Lean muscles sheathed in smooth brown skin and strung onto slight frames harbor surprising strength. Dark eyes set over high cheekbones resist an obvious impulse to drink in visual details—instead they volley between furtive and forthright glances, and engage in many over-your-shoulder stares into the distance. Their gazes are pulled away by politeness. And though always interested in company and conversation, they never sit down in the presence of foreigners.

Visitors to the country see a narrow segment of the population on resort islands—young men between the ages of 17 and 30, no women, children, old men. Muslim, but not necessarily devout, shoulders and thighs are always covered, whether it be by the staff uniform of the resort or loose slacks and a t-shirt. The chocolate-skinned, fully clothed Maldivians are in stark contrast to the bikini-(barely)-covered pale Europeans who make up most of the tourist population. Though nearly all Maldivians speak English well, they slip into their deeply voweled native Divehi whenever they speak among themselves.

نفرین الومیت وفتح قریب
الله

"*Shukuriya*." A halting Divehian thank you spills from my lips, tasting sweet, however strange. The word is met with wide-eyed disbelief at the native sound emanating from blond hair and blue eyes, but nevertheless a broad grin shines back as the young man passes my dive gear over onto the *dhoni*. Sea-weathered wood, years ago painted to match the sky, the traditional *dhoni* is over 30 feet long, wide-girthed, and has been fitted with tank racks and a canvas cover for shade from the intense equatorial sun. Now filled with divers and gear, the three crew members stand at the stern and encourage the engine to life. A low gurgling rotation, labored, is the song of the *dhoni* motor—it accompanies

each boat dive like a well-trained pianist. The captain, in black slacks, a red-and-white soccer jersey and silver sunglasses, maneuvers the huge rudder with his right foot, pressing it against the water and coaxing the dhoni in the desired direction. The dhoni picks up speed, and in addition to the wake spreading out behind it, a school of hundreds of flying fish sail above the surface of the water to either side of the boat, some spanning more than 40 feet before plunging back into the water. The crew demonstrates delicate maneuvers through narrow, coral-lined channels, deft control over 12-foot high swells, practiced balance on the rocking deck to don gear. I plunge, right fin first, into 84° Indian Ocean and sink below to Hudhuveli, the reef off the tiny speck island of Lankanfushi in North Malé Atoll.

of visibility, a juvenile manta flies in toward the reef, emerging as a blue silhouette and developing shape as it nears. Ten divers suspend as if frozen, motionless and breathtaken, watching the young ray fly above and away with all the grace humans strive to achieve but never attain.

Back on the dhoni, exhilarated and amazed, I rest on the bow as other divers clamber onto the boat. Ahead, a dark brown, ridged round object moves toward the boat—an eight-foot-long leatherback turtle breaches the surface for air, then quickly disappears again below. Magical.

نفرين الوصيف وفتح قارب
الله

One fish, two fish. Red fish, blue fish. The underwater realm of Maldives far surpasses Dr. Seuss. In addition to the stunning display of hard and soft corals, vari-

ous invertebrates and the occasional crustacean, Maldives is home to more than 700 species of fish. Gobies, wrasse, blennies, puffers, anthias, fusiliers, eels, sharks, rays, groupers, corises, trigger-, file-, butterfly-, banner-, parrot-, unicorn-, surgeon-, soldier-, squirrel-, frog-, cornet-, file- and trunkfish...to name a few. It is stunning. But perhaps even more stunning is the sheer abundance in which they flock to the Maldivian reefs. At any given time underwater there are hundreds of fish cleaning, eating and doing the things fish do on the reefs. They are unafraid of divers, curious even. Many of the sites appear untouched. Many are.

The marine life flourishes in spite of the fact that the fishing industry is the traditional base of the economy, second now only to tourism. But strict government rules forbid the use of any method other than line fishing, and this has maintained the great diversity and health of the marine environment by preventing overfishing. Employing a technique where one man hauls the fish out of the water and over his shoulder, another man takes the fish off the line, and a third man rebaits the hook, a native fishing boat at work is a fascinating sight to see. In rapid-fire, assembly-line fashion, the line is whipped back and forth overhead, each time bringing up a yellowfin, little, or skipjack tuna, the principle catch.

نفرين الوصيف وفتح قارب
الله

The multicolored dhonis pack into Malé's trading dock like cars in a Superbowl parking lot. Four boats deep and as stretched out in either direction as the dock will allow, fishing boats tied up to one another rock side to side as skippers haul their catch out of the lower




Michelle Westmorland

Astonishing. A metropolis at rush hour unfolds before me on the sloping reef wall. With right shoulder to the reef, buddy in the peripheral, and my eyes darting wildly, there is gloriously too much to take in. Dozens of species of reef fishes crowd in all of the nooks and crannies—redtooth triggerfish undulate fins in the slight current; moorish idols, bannerfish and butterflyfish decorate the wall with their bright yellows, blacks and whites; powder-blue surgeonfish scavenge in damselfish' private pastures of algae; keeltail needlefish sinuate, barely visible, just off the reef in the big blue. Color is everywhere on the reef, moving and static, loud and shy. Drab yet gargantuan in comparison, a regal humphead wrasse cruises by, observing with calculated clicks of its eyeball, moving the orb much as a bird tilts its head—stilted, deliberate. Then, from beyond the scope



John Newman



decks and onto the market floor. Blood-stained and weary, the fishermen literally drag 30-pound-plus yellowfin tuna by a rope running through the gills across the cobble street, up a makeshift wooden ramp, and onto the concrete floor of the fishmarket. Sheltered only by two walls and a high ceiling, the large market has no tables, no display cases, no cash registers. The scent of fresh fish, pungent and not unpleasant, mingles with that of the sea just across the street, and of the warm rain that suddenly starts falling. Fishermen stand guard over their piscine wares, lying in neat rows on the floor. Huge tuna cover the concrete, interspersed with smaller bonitas, a pile of yellow fusiliers, and thong-clad feet. Be careful not to slip on the blood. Friendly bargaining fills the open market with chattering Divehi, and, separated by a half-wall four feet high, the north side of the large room is the cleaning station. For two rufiyaa (about 17 cents) per fish, a recent market purchase is cleaned, deboned and filleted. The men standing at the cleaning counters, darkened with fish blood, are masters at their craft; while rapidly firing off a heated conversation with someone on the other side of the partition, they can finish a fish in 15 seconds, without even looking.

The fish market harbors the most bustling activity on Malé, while the nearby fruit market operates at a much slower pace. Older men, most claiming fewer than eight teeth, ply their wares against a language barrier, and almost everything is two for a dollar. Mangoes, passionfruit, coconut, custardfruit, and large bunches of tiny bananas comprise all that can be grown in Maldives. Everything else, with the exception of fish, is imported. Tobacco rolled into newspaper cigarettes and coconut paste rolled in banana leaves take their place next to the fresh fruits on the thigh-high tables. A grisly old fellow sits at the back of his booth on a three-legged stool, crushing coral into a paste with a mortar and pestal. He smears the thick white paste onto a pepper leaf, then adds sliced betelnut and a whole clove and rolls the leaf into a small wad. He places it into his mouth and begins chomping vigorously with what teeth he has left. It makes him salivate, and he spits red into a tin next to his table...it's the Maldivian version of Copenhagen. A weathered hand passes a leaf-wrapped sample my way. It tastes like a bitter, chalky bark spiked with clove, and the mild stimulant splinters in my mouth. He gives me a stained and incomplete smile, then gestures to his table, where pepper leaves, cloves and slices of rosy-white betelnut are laid out. "Two for a dollar?" The large warehouse building is heavy with the smell of ripeness, and though the walls shut out the rain, it somehow manages to moisten the air.

نهرت الوميت وفتح قريب
الله

The southwest monsoon season, known as *hulhangu* by Maldivians, brings storms and rain from May to November. The northeast monsoon—*iruvai*—is a drier time. Nevertheless, the average temperature is strikingly consistent throughout the year, ranging from 86° to 90°, with frequent breezes cooling the air. Most days are clear and beautiful, and they meld into clear and beautiful nights.

Diving Maldives is done by live-aboard, from a base island, or a combination of both. Aboard a vessel, the atolls further north or south become accessible, and diving in the far reaches, as with anywhere else, is relatively untouched. Opportunities to visit local (i.e. non-tourist) islands arise, and the sea gently rocks a lullaby each evening. From an island, accessible dive sites are restricted by proximity, and they are likely to have other divers. But the quality of the diving remains unbelievable, and an island has a tropical distinction unmatched by live-aboard. And an island, though small, is a lot larger than a ship.

نهرت الوميت وفتح قريب
الله

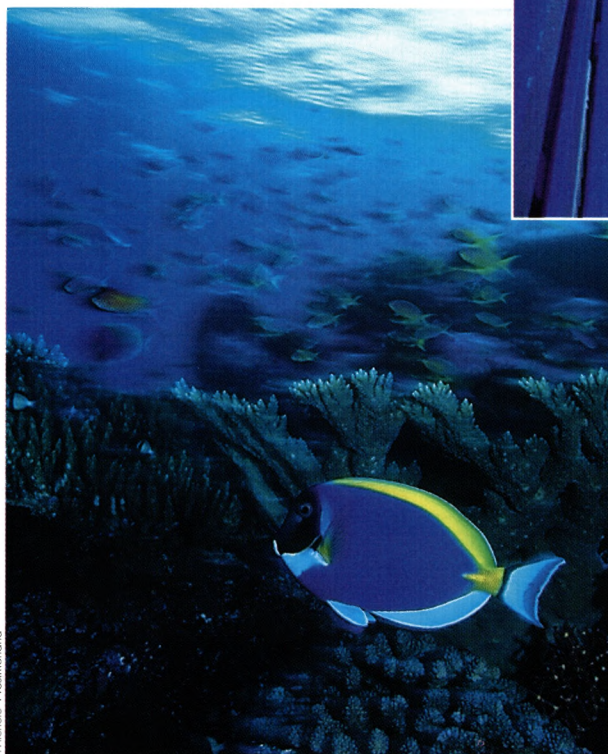
The sun fell down over an hour ago, and the beach of the uninhabited—but not unimproved— island is clad with picnic tables, burning torches in the sand, and scampering ghost crabs displaying their indignation at human invasion with quick darting sprints up and down the sand. Flying foxes, with delicate skin stretched over a wingspan of near-



John Newman

The one phone booth on Ungoofaaru, tucked between the palms (opposite); Eurodivers' dhonis docked at Kanifinaloo (above); rolling into the Indian Ocean (right); a blue surgeonfish patrolling the reef (below).

ly three feet, cruise the night sky and pick their way among the palms. The luxury of prepared food and drink is brought to the island—a feast of barbecue and spirits set against a night so far away. The ship I sail on moored in the distant dark of the expansive sea, glitters with tiny lights strung from the bow to the crow's nest, from the nest to the stern. The sand I sink my toes into is still warm from the visiting sun, and the glow of flickering fire mingles with moonlight to illuminate the beach. There are 50 of us, perhaps, and as desserts are finished and tables cleared, the drumming begins. Donning flowing white sarongs and shirts, chests slashed with a red sash and heads wrapped in white cloth, the Maldivian dancers chant with the drums, slowly at first, then rising in pace and intensity. One separates from the group of a dozen performers, and slinks to the sand between us and them, moving his body to the



Michelle Westmorland



John Newman

rhythm of the drums, speaking in movement of a strange sensuality, a natural eroticism, a poignant trance. Another joins him, and another. One holds a pepper leaf delicately in his fingers, and the one he passes it to shall join the dance. More leaves appear, the drumbeats and chanting increase, and more dancers crowd on the sand. In the end, there is no one sitting—all are taken up by the dance, and released from their inhibitions. There are no waves crashing the shore. Only sweet breezes in the palms, roasted meat and fish scenting the ocean air, and laughter in many different languages. When drums fade and torches flicker out, only memory and dimples in

continued on page 124

A sunken airplane provides some interesting wreck diving—a perfect companion to the teeming reefs.



To Bomba Shack and Back

The piquant charm of the British Virgin Islands makes you see more, and feel better

STORY BY HEATHER CANTWELL
PHOTOS BY CLARA TAYLOR BEMENT



“To all you visitors Bomba Shack is a Historical site from the 1920s. Most native Tortolain Live Like this be Fore today time. So Enjoy don’t Destroy. Drink Bomba Punch & You will see more and Feel Better. Cappoon Bay. BVI I Love Bomba.”

—Inscription on a whitewashed board at the entrance to Bomba’s Shack. West End, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

Amidst worn tires, patched surfboards, swinging statuettes, signed brassieres, and other kitschy treasures, poetry, profanity lives an ongoing treatise on sex, politics, culture and the ever-evolving art of the party. Once a month, in the ambient glow of the full moon—so ripe with milky light one expects it to fall, at any moment, into the sapphire sea—revelers swarm to Bomba’s thatch-roofed lunar temple to court the elusive spirit that animates the islands.

From a rickety platform within this dimly-lit structure, a charismatic troubadour unleashes some hypnotic strain of hip-hop, laying the groove on so thick you could slice it with a butter knife and spread it on toast. Bomba’s famous rum punch, (the elixir of unity), flows from the bar, the tireless heart of this pulsating organism. In the cracks left by swirling dancers, a hastily scrawled relic of a bygone party captures a serene aspect of

the moment: “The night sat lightly upon the sea and the land. There was no weight of darkness; there were no shadows. The white light of the moon had fallen upon the world like the mystery and the softness of sleep.” Some indefinable mojo inspired one partygoer to write, another stapled her panties to a rafter. That’s Bomba’s. The magic is spontaneous and unpredictable, as erratic and playful as moonlight.

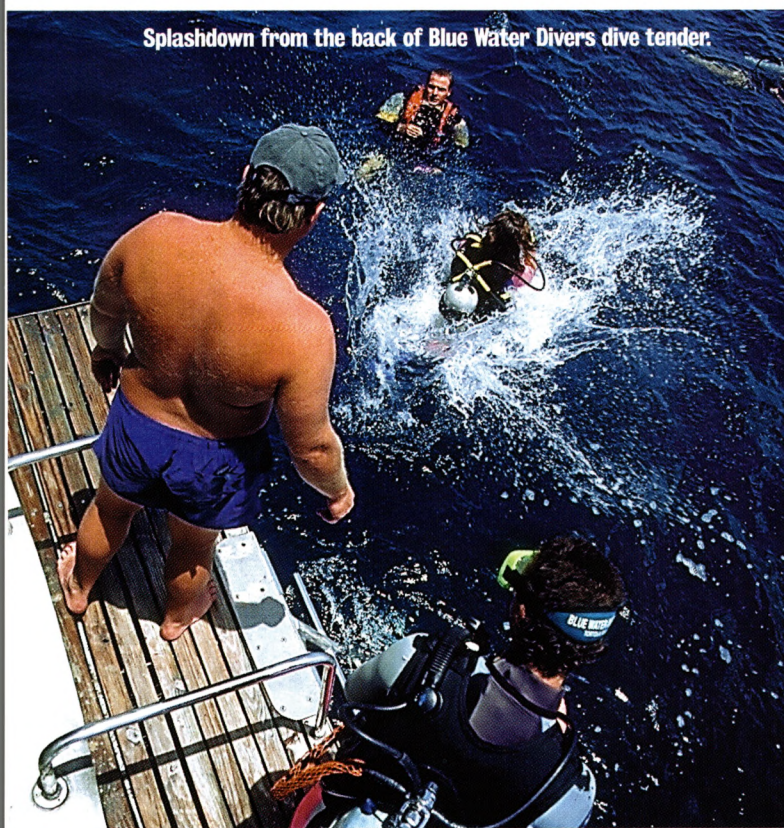
Like so many things in this community of islands, it’s hard to imagine Bomba’s existing anywhere else. The eccentric gathering is the continuum of things “be Fore Today time,” when seeing and feeling more meant something. Stories of past Full Moon Parties grow wilder and less likely as Luna charts her course across the sky, crescendoing at midnight, when Bomba distributes mushroom tea, a psychedelic concoction that turns the Surf Shack into a ballroom of experiential fractals.

What Is It About This Place?

The British Virgin Islands are a strange place. And, while the epicenter of the strangeness is difficult to place, it's certainly not Bomba's Surf Shack. Bomba's is merely a manifestation of some charming confluence of geographical, historical and cultural phenomenon—a tiny eddy in some larger, more powerful flow.

Geographically, the BVIs are the first in a chain of Caribbean islands that stretches south to South America. Located about 60 miles east of Puerto Rico, along the intersection of the Atlantic and the Caribbean, the Virgins rise majestically and unexpectedly—as if The Grand Jeweler, in a moment of frivolity, tossed a handful of emeralds onto a velvety swath of blue.

Columbus stumbled over the islands—and their original inhabitants, the Carib Indians—500 years ago. Today, the BVI and its swank neighbor, the United States Virgin Islands (USVI), offer drastically different experiences. The USVI—St. Thomas, St. Croix, St. John and a slew of smaller islands—caters to a casino crowd, while the BVI retains an unspoiled innocence, uncommon in the Caribbean.



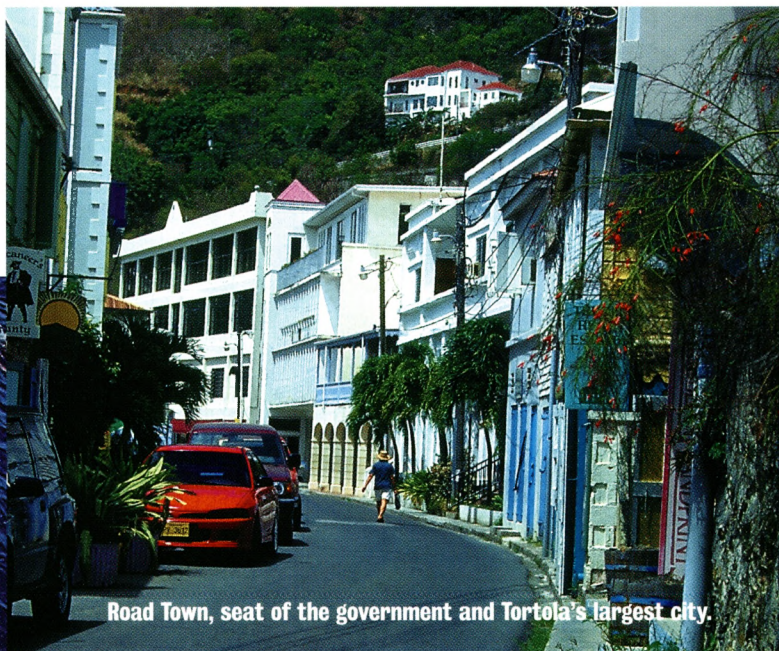
The BVI's high employment and literacy rates provide a healthy socio-economic base and few footholds for poverty and crime, while the local government, under the auspices of Her Majesty, The Queen of England, is fiercely autonomous—primary factors in the BVI's refreshing and marvelous strangeness.

"One of the things that's unique here," explains long-time Tortola resident and underwater photographer Jim Scheiner, "is after what basically amounted to a slave revolt in the 1850s, all the whites left. So, for about 100 years, there was barely any white population. The BVI, unlike most other places in the Caribbean, doesn't have a white privileged class. The people here own both the land and the power, so there is very little hostility or racial tension."

While it's impossible to generalize, the British Virgin Islanders have a reputation for being strong, independent people, deeply rooted in community and tradition.

As the sun sets over northeastern Tortola's Little Apple Bay, Jeff and Jinx Morgan, proprietors of The Sugar Mill Hotel and Restaurant, tell stories beneath the shadow of the restaurant's verandah behind goblets glimmering with sunset-tinged wine.

"Bomba's grandfather is buried in the garden," Jeff begins, pausing to scan the expanse of flowers, greenery and sugar mill ruins. "Bomba's grandfather used to own this entire estate. In the 1920s, when the British introduced rates, which are like property taxes, he left his house, moved to the beach and built Bomba's Shack. He said 'You can take my property, but you can't make me pay.'"



Bomba's Shack is a living symbol of the BV-Islanders' independent spirit and penchant for creative problem solving. Their vision for the future is similarly unique. Strict development regulations discourage high-rises, fast food chains and strip malls, leaving plenty of room for local businesses to flourish in a lush natural landscape.

The BVI's 60 islands and cays, most of them uninhabited, are wild and gorgeous. Tortola, with about 9,000 inhabitants, is the largest island in the BVI. But even here, Road Town, the seat of government, and a handful of smaller villages and towns seem to occupy only the nooks and crannies of a terrain dominated by mountains, rainforest, and acres of vegetation. Cacti, oleander, flamboyant trees, frangipani and tangles of mangrove are the islands' dominant species.

Virgin Gorda, the second largest island, is similarly picturesque and pristine. The closest thing you'll find to a Hard Rock Cafe is The Baths, a collection of granite boulders and watery caves along the western coastline. You can't get a hamburger there, but it's a magical place to snorkel.

Yarns of Yore

Tales of pirate treasure are endemic to the BVI's fantastic mythology. Back in the days of swashbuckling and gunpowder, the likes of Captain Kidd and Blackbeard (a.k.a. Edward Teach) pillaged and plundered along the Sir Francis Drake Channel, a major shipping lane that transects the Virgins. Legend has it, the villains buried their loot among the BVI's multitude of small, obscure islands—Jost van Dyke, the Dogs, Norman, Peter, Ginger, Cooper, Salt, Dead Chest and Fallen Jerusalem. Much of it remains undiscovered even today.

In the BVI, treasure stories grow wilder and thicker than frangipani. And, while countless material riches may gather dust in the

islands' dank, secret spaces, seekers of natural treasures needn't look far to reap the BVI's rewards. Long a mecca for sailors, the islands' tepid, clear waters—thick with coral reefs, underwater formations and swarms of fish—are an aquatic enthusiast's dream. Balmy, subtropical weather warms the waters, while tradewinds cool the land, lift the flocks of seabirds into the Easter-egg-blue sky and fill the sails of the merry flotilla that gather in the hundreds of perfect harbors.

Beneath the waves, scuba divers chart new courses among the islands, creating a treasure map of dive sites, where X—and a slew of moorings put in by the National Parks Trust and the BVI Dive Operator's Association—marks the spots most fabulous.

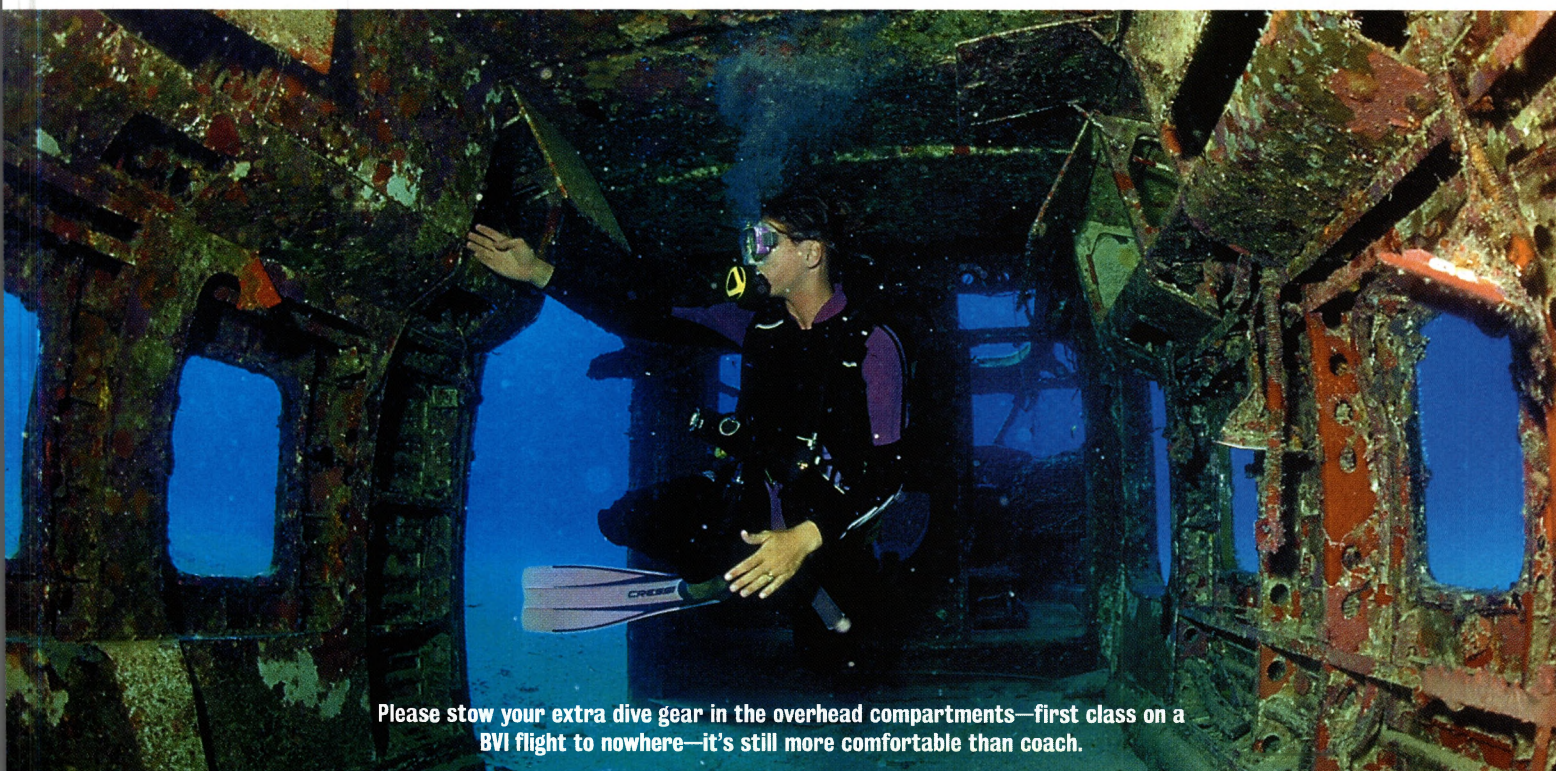
Bounty Below the Sea

"Rub the portal, it will improve your sex life," promises Lofty Ciccieri, a divemaster at Tortola-based Blue Water Divers, before launching shamelessly into a rather ribald interpretation of the life and wreck of the *RMS Rhone*. Local divemasters tell cre-

The stern is less ship-like, but equally alive. Its scattered pieces, blanketed in sponges and corals, resemble modern sculptures. In a dark swim-through near the rudder, blackbar soldierfish hover near walls mantled in velvety cups of coral. Feisty damselfish guard the ship's huge propeller while schools of horse-eye jacks and snappers patrol the boiler room and crow's nest. At every turn, the watery museum provides another glimpse of history attended by a piscine docent, including a lovely queen angelfish, whose demure movements lend an air of sovereignty to an otherwise solemn scene.

Beyond the *Rhone*, the BVI's dive sites are numerous and varied. While Baskin in the Sun's shop in West End, Tortola, frequents the island's less-explored northern side—especially during calm summer months—dive boats out of both Tortola and Virgin Gorda gather around the islands south and east of Tortola.

In general, the dive sites are relatively shallow, with few dives beyond 100 feet. Visibility, too, can reach 100 feet, and many of the dives are perfect for beginners, making the BVI a favorite



Please stow your extra dive gear in the overhead compartments—first class on a BVI flight to nowhere—it's still more comfortable than coach.

atively-altered versions of the story, but all agree that the *Rhone* met her disastrous fate on October 29, 1867, when a run-in with Salt Island's Black Rock Point sent the ship and nearly 200 people to a watery grave. A 310-foot iron ship with a 40-foot beam, she was the pride of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. Now, she is one of the Caribbean's more picturesque wrecks, a ghostly skeleton caked with coral, eels and fish.

It takes at least two dives to see the *Rhone*—many more to unearth her many treasures. Her nearly intact bow rests upright in 70- to 80-feet of water, while the stern lies a short boat ride away, at a depth of about 30 feet. From above, the bow looks like the skeleton of some massive ancient beast. A swim through the inner chamber reveals barracuda hovering menacingly in the shadows and schools of squirrelfish in the chute that once held coal. Outside the hull, near the ship's massive winches, blue tang cluster around a thin whip of black coral, while a playful Spanish hogfish darts between shards of sponge-covered iron.

place for check-out dives and groups with mixed experience.

Near Dead Chest, the coral canyons of Painted Walls, a popular dive site, easily live up to their name, and the caves of Blond Rock are a favorite hang-out for schools of reef fish, drawn by banks of fan corals and vibrant sponges. Gargantuan coral heads people Alice in Wonderland off Ginger Island—the BVI's most popular advanced dive, while Ginger Steps offers a more mellow descent with patches of coral, schools of reef fish and the occasional turtle. At another local favorite, Santa Monica Rock, a resident eight-foot green moray can usually be found huddled in his cave or, if you're lucky, undulating gracefully along the reef, before gathering his scintillating folds beneath a sponge-encrusted ledge.

But, the best dive sites aren't necessarily the most popular ones. Local divemasters expertly assess conditions, steering guests to the best sites of the day. When the currents are too strong for sites like Alice in Wonderland and Santa Monica Rock, Kilbride's

Underwater Tours, based at the Bitter End Yacht Club on Virgin Gorda, knows plenty of spectacular alternatives in their own backyard. Near Mountain Point, Virgin Gorda, at a site called Big Grotto, it is common to find a half-dozen bulbous squid and schools of silversides collecting in exotic formations in a vault of colorful rocks, while a scrawled filefish shares a ledge with a tiny turtle.

Unlike Caribbean diving focused on a single drop-off or a small group of islands, the BVI provides hundreds of variations.

"What keeps me here is the variety," explains Sue Thompson, a divemaster/instructor at Tortola's Baskin in the Sun, who has been exploring the BVI's underwater world for over a decade. "There is such an abundance of wildlife and scenery, both topside and underwater. I have a very low tolerance for boredom, and I don't get bored here. . . . With all of these islands, it changes dramatically from moment to moment and from day to day."

The BVI Experience

Of course, diving is only one aspect of the BVI experience. This particular Caribbean paradise is refreshingly spare in

coastal route east out of Road Town, past Nanny Cay, and hang a right on Zion Hill Road, a mountain byway that drops you into Cappaons Bay, home to Bomba's Surf Shack. Let imagination, whim and instinct take the wheel, and you're in for quite an adventure.

To the west, at the end of a bumpy, dirt road, lies Smuggler's Cove. Groves of palms and greenery frame a postcard-perfect stretch of sand, and the only sign of civilization is the Honesty Bar, a cluttered porch, where Bob and Nell Denniston sit in front of the 1966 Lincoln convertible that once carried Queen Elizabeth around Tortola, sipping Heinekens and disseminating wild yarns. Put a couple of bucks in the bowl on the bar and find your way back to the brown refrigerator for a beer. Former Iowans Bob and Nell have been gathering Tortola's gossip since 1958, and their local history lessons are gratis, irreverent and unpredictable.

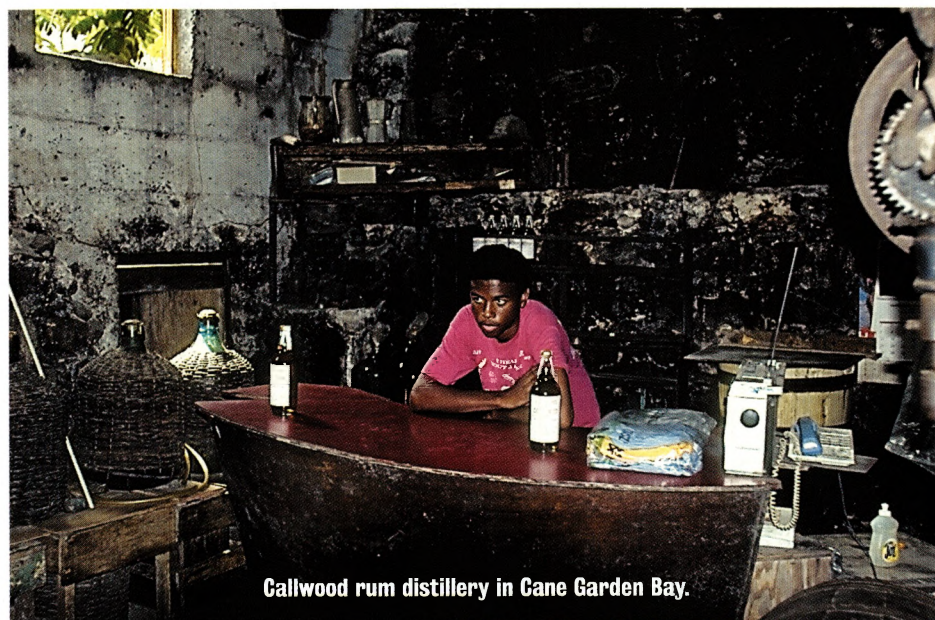
Farther east, a string of villages and bays rests between mountainous plunges. Equalize early and often. Brake for goats, hogs, cows, sheep and chickens. And, remember that beyond every heart-stopping passage, there's a view worth palpitating for.

At sleepy Cane Garden Bay, tire swings lift children over turquoise waters and local restaurants peddle ice cream, seafood and live music. Even farther east, at Josiah's Bay, one of the BVI's prime surfing beaches, Naomi and Marva run a tiny restaurant with of rustling seashell wind-chimes and breaking waves.

If it's altitude you're craving, venture up 1,780 feet to Sage Mountain National Park, the islands' last remaining rainforest and highest point. On the way, check out Skyview Restaurant and its 360-degree birds-eye view.

A short boat ride from Road Town, Virgin Gorda is even less developed than Tortola. Beyond the bustling ferry dock, drying laundry flaps in the breeze outside the island's most colorful structure, an Ethiopian Church splashed with vibrant shades of red, yellow and green. Safari

continued on page 120



Callwood rum distillery in Cane Garden Bay.

tourist traps. In the BVI, experience is an action verb—spontaneity, open-mindedness and a zest for adventure and discovery are prerequisites for the sort of extraordinary personal encounters that set the BVI apart.

Road Town, on Tortola, reflects the island's early Spanish, Dutch and English influences. Winding, narrow streets, colorful storefronts and restaurants ranging from The Chicken Bus, a walk-up trailer serving fried chicken and rich, local soups, to Pusser's Pub, where a fruity rum drink called "The Painkiller" flows like soma from a coconut grail.

While the island's major dive shops are on the southern side of Tortola (except for Baskin in the Sun's West End site), the north is culturally diverse and visually spectacular, but to experience it you must rent a car. Take the



A school of squirrelfish patrol the wreck of the RMS Rhone off Salt Island.

Voyages

Dive Travel

Special Edition



The Best in Live-aboard Travel 1998

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Her ferocity surprised him. It appeared initially in a brief but forceful invitation to accompany her on one of her expeditions.

"But what will I do," he asked, "while you're making photographs?"

She shrugged and turned back to the light table, bent over rows of negatives, sorting with her quick and graceful hands, winnowing multiple possibilities into a few unforgettable truths. He stood, momentarily forgotten, in the doorway, considering. To watch her frame the magnificence of her vision, seize the moment of tropical dawn, the sun a luminous unseen flame casting rays of light across the warm sea, or catch the whale fanning its spray against the blackening stormy sky, or snatch the leaping dolphins of dusk at the apex of their curve. He longed, suddenly, to see her dark seal's head duck beneath the photographer's drape, her black eyes watching, watching, finding the opening, setting the image. He speculated, weighed, decided.

In the final week before departure, she pressed again, asking him over dinner one night. Yes.

At the dock, she handed her luggage up to the deckhand, bags of film and lights, boxes of cameras more delicate than gull's eggs, bundled tripods, and a single leather valise stuffed with clothes. He clambered aboard the sleek schooner, set about making himself comfortable in the aft cabin, while she stowed gear, reviewed charts, made plans with the captain.

That had been more than three months ago.

*Always moving west, northwest,
the schooner slipped through turquoise
straits, dodged rocks and coral heads,
rushed before the wind along the
emerald northern coasts....*

In the intervening weeks, they'd found the rhythm of the ocean's days and darks, rolling through the passage sometimes as two solos, sometimes a team. They'd made their first landfall in the Solomons, off a speck of island with a couple of fishing shacks and a moon-curved sliver of pale beach littered with fallen coconuts. They'd dropped anchor in the shelter of unnamed harbors on unnamed atolls, and traded cans of con-

densed milk for fish with eyes like shining coins that they later broiled for dinner. And everywhere they stopped, they stripped off their clothes to float silently, peering through home-made goggles into water incandescent as a diamond. Again and again, they marveled at the miracle of life seemingly painted by artists who had yet to exist, they thrilled at the ancient world not yet depicted by the



Alexandra Bourdellon

moderns who were still to come. Sharks wove swift shadows across the sun-shot sand below, and small fish darted for safety in the gulies and caves of the rainbowed coral.

Always moving west, northwest, the schooner slipped through turquoise straits, dodged rocks and coral heads, rushed before the wind along the emerald northern coasts of New Guinea, into the Celebes Sea, the Sulu Sea, the South China Sea. Always she made her photographs, holding the leaning curve of palms, the shy faces of people who shared no single word but common human warmth, the slap of a whale's massive fluke hanging jeweled droplets across the image. And once, while she rested on deck, he aimed her camera, caught the quiescent moment, the schooner rocking, the solemn slap of water along the hull, the brooding jungle beyond, and here the vulnerable generosity of her nape, the swell of hip, the sleek seal-dark smoothness of her head.

• • • • •

Who can deny the romance of the live-aboard life, the days marked by sun rise and moon set, tide changes, the simple schedule of morning, afternoon, evening dives offset by lunch, naps, hours on deck with a good book? Lulled to sleep by the gentle rocking, you hear all the sea's gentle argot—the brush of waves against the hull, the susurrant of the rising tide, the metallic clink of halyards against the mast. Perhaps not many of us have the opportunity to make an expedition, sampling the wonders of

the waves for months at a stretch, nonetheless, whenever we steal away to sea, whether for three days or three weeks, we experience the paradoxically relaxing and rejuvenating powers of the ocean. We spend more waking hours beneath the surface, and more hours—period—in close proximity to the oceanic mystery...

Every year the opportunities for sea-born adventures expand as more operators bring new vessels and expertise to previously unexplored reaches of the sea. Last year our office was flooded with brochures, e-mail and faxes announcing the arrival of new boats, or relocated vessels for those with the live-aboard urge. These days, from Antarctica to Bikini Atoll, from Fiji to the Turks and Caicos, if you've got the desire, there's someone who can float your boat.

In this issue of *Dive Travel Magazine*, we have assembled the Voyages section with an eye to your floating literary entertainment. Here you'll find samplings from stories aboard, serious, humorous and historical. Bring the pages with you for live-aboard reading, or settle back in the bathtub, and have the watery version of armchair adventure. Whichever your reading pleasure, we hope you find time in the next year to schedule some voyaging days of your own, seize the chance to drop beneath the surface and commune with the citizens of Planet Ocean.... *Bon Voyage!*

—Susan Watrous

The Offshore Pirate

This unlikely story begins on a sea that was a blue dream, as colorful as blue-silk stockings, and beneath a sky as blue as the irises of children's eyes. From the western half of the sky the sun was shying little golden disks at the sea—if you gazed intently enough you could see them skip from wave tip to wave tip until they joined a broad collar of golden coin that was collecting half a mile out and would eventually be a dazzling sunset. About half-way between the Florida shore and the golden collar a white steam-yacht, very young and graceful, was riding at anchor and under a blue-and-white awning aft, a yellow-haired girl reclined in a wicker settee reading *The Revolt of the Angels*, by Anatole France.

She was about nineteen, slender and supple, with a spoiled alluring mouth and quick gray eyes full of a radiant curiosity. Her feet, stockingless, and adorned rather than clad in blue-satin slippers which swung nonchalantly from her toes, were perched on the arm of a settee adjoining the one she occupied. And as she read she intermittently regaled herself by a faint application to her tongue of a half-lemon that she held in her hand. The other half, sucked dry, lay on the deck at her feet and rocked very gently to and fro at the almost imperceptible motion of the tide.

The second half-lemon was well-nigh pulpless and the golden collar had grown astonishing in width, when suddenly the drowsy silence which enveloped the yacht was broken by the sound of heavy footsteps and an elderly man topped with orderly gray hair and clad in a white-flannel suit appeared at the head of the companionway. There he paused for a moment until his eyes became accustomed to the sun, and then seeing the girl under the awning he uttered a long even grunt of disapproval.

If he intended thereby to obtain a rise of any sort he was doomed to disappointment. The girl calmly turned over two pages, turned back one, raised the lemon mechanically to tasting distance, and then very faintly but quite unmistakably yawned.

"Ardita!" said the gray-haired man sternly.

Ardita uttered a small sound indicating nothing.

"Ardita!" he repeated. "Ardita!"

Ardita raised the lemon languidly, allowing three words to slip out before it reached her tongue.

"Oh, shut up."

"Ardita!"

"What?"

"Will you listen to me—or will I have to get a servant to hold you while I talk to you?"

The lemon descended slowly and scornfully.

"Put it in writing."

"Will you have the decency to close that abominable book and discard that lemon for two minutes?"

"Oh, can't you lemme alone for a second?"

"Ardita, I have just received a telephone message from shore—"

"Telephone?" She showed for the first time a faint interest.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald
Excerpted from May 29, 1920,
The Saturday Evening Post



Show Me The Shirt

I was not trying to be fashionably late. I was just plum tuckered out from my long flight when the knock came at my door.

"John, dinner!" a crew member called. "Going to join us?"

Conking my head on the coffin-close upper bunk of the live-aboard cabin, I shouted, "Be there in a moment." I grabbed a t-shirt from my yet-to-be-unpacked bag and made my way up from the depths of the boat. In my hurry, I whacked my shin on the stairs, making my grand entrance to dinner hunched over like Quasimodo as I rubbed the pain away.

"Good evening," I greeted my fellow passengers, straightening up to full height. With faces and bodies turning, I was greeted from the far-flung corners of the world. A t-shirt from Palau covered a slightly growing paunch. Papua New Guinea faced me, wedged between the Azores and Maldives. Thousands of miles from the original Great Barrier Reef, a reasonable facsimile set down her MaiTai. The names marched on—South Africa, Thailand, Fiji—a crash course in the diving geography of the world. But one t-shirt caught my eye. A shirt that stretched across a young woman named a place I had never heard of, much less could even pronounce. As I contemplated the hidden Xanadu, I saw the expressions of the faces above the worldly shirts change. In that single moment, I became an outcast, a leper, a pariah. Bewilderment washed over me. I checked my fly. That wasn't it. With my head still bowed, I saw it. The shirt. My shirt. How could I have been so stupid, so blind? I had broken a Cardinal Rule. I wore a shirt that announced where I came from, instead of where I'd been. Stenciled across my 100 percent cotton tee, two words cried out, 'The Bronx.'

I sat down to dinner and found myself directly across from the lovely unknown t-shirt. As I tried once again to decipher the twisted alphabet across her chest, a meal arrived in front of me. Trying not to stare, I pretended to be interested in my cuisine, but my eyes were drawn back. Where the hell is that place?

The small talk I interrupted with my entrance resumed. "Why," said Palau, with nary a crumb on his shirt, "I dived the Sea of blah, blah, when you could still see schools of blah, blah, but now, you're lucky to see a blah...."

The Maldives jumped in. "I'll say, do I remember that? But back in 19blah, blah, I was the one who suggested to Jimmy Blah to upgrade his one-horse dive shop in blah and now, standing room only! A gold mine! I still have one of his first shirts. Can't get those any more...."

The Great Barrier Reef left a hint of lipstick on her chardonnay glass. "This is our fourth live-aboard this year," she said as she touched the hand of Fiji. Fiji nodded with the assurance of more t-shirts in the future.

I began to understand about the shirts. They were our openly stated passports, our showcase of rubber stamps from bored customs agents. Where we've been, what we can afford, and, like connecting dots in a massive unfinished global drawing, where we may wind up. Like expanding galaxies we spiraled outward from our meager beginnings, t-shirting our journey along the way.

Yes, it was the shirt that we saw first, and the shirt that first spoke for us. And if you were a true 'shirty,' you spoke in exotic tongues and of many places. You spoke of a place as you came in for breakfast, perhaps another at lunch, and certainly the all-important/I-have-the-only-shirt-from-There dinner t-shirt. And if you were good, really good, you had a different shirt in between meals, in between dives. A tidbit, a mere morsel of a destination that was just a taste to hold you over until your next real dive spot. A walking Tower of Babel of destinations. It was all in the shirt, and I had blown it.

• Voyages •

Down Under Dive

Easy access to the Great Barrier Reef, where life on board can be as busy...or as relaxed as you choose.

That's the world of the S.V. ATLANTIC CLIPPER.

Almost every die-hard live-aboard diver has had the ultimate dive trip. don't you wish you could have stayed forever? Now you can!

S.V. *Atlantic Clipper* is Cairn's premier live-aboard vessel—with a twist—you can stay as long as you like!

Clipper is a spectacular 140-foot sailing 'tall ship'. Bought by Down Under Dive in 1987, and modified especially for diving, diving and diving. Of course there's sleeping eating and drinking too, but who cares? The secret of staying as long as you like is this—*Clipper* stays on station at sea. Transfers are made everyday by a fast 60-foot vessel, allowing you to choose the length of your holiday. Norman, Saxon and Hastings are just three of the reefs *Clipper* visits.

If you look at a chart, you will find these reefs within 50 miles of the mainland, which makes them perfect venues for novices. The *Clipper* has plenty of Instructors, and they are

Onboard luxury: saloon and dining area (left) and a saltwater spa on the foredeck.

more than happy to help in any way.

Seasoned divers, don't be put off. Caves, swim-throughs and sheer 130-foot walls are enough to bring a smile to the most experienced of divers. A dive tender is available to whisk you out to the reef edge.

Each reef offers its own unique array of marine life. Saxon Reef with its green turtle population is a favorite for videographers. Hastings Reef boasts a large following of white tipped reef sharks, buffalo wrasse and schools of pelagic fish. Norman Reef is a diver dream. Giant humphead maori wrasses, turtles, sharks and even an occasional whale shark make this a very exciting place!

Atlantic Clipper boasts a large air-conditioned saloon, fully stocked bar, 15 spacious cabins, with double-, three- and four-berth accommodations for up to 43 passengers. There is even a honeymoon suite! Twin and three-berth cabins have connecting ensuites. All other have the use of community bathrooms. There is TV and video in the lounge, and what better way to relax than in the spa on the foredeck?

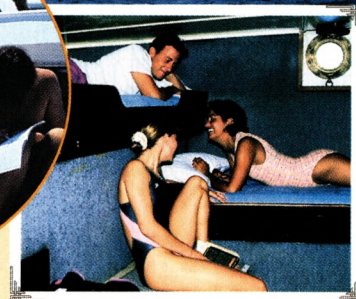
The *Clipper's* roomy dive deck has a full stock of the latest Sherwood and Seaquest equipment. Twin compressors, supplying 35 cfm into a bank system, mean never having to wait for an airfill.

Open Water Dive courses are a daily occurrence, with Advanced, Rescue and Divemaster running weekly. All divers can choose to partake in further education. If you have a non-diving partner, this is one trip when they will feel a part of the action, with heaps of snorkeling, snorkel tours and resort dives being offered every day.

If you want some 'real' diving, *Clipper's* staff can take you on a tour that will knock your fins off! Of course dive



Dive diagonal: simple entry on Down Under Dive's side ladder.



guides aren't a necessity. You can grab your buddy and potter around by yourself.

How will you ever get by without this? Early diving before breakfast, snorkeling before lunch, afternoon naps, followed by an evening of night diving or sipping cocktails and watching spectacular Coral Sea sunsets.

What a great feeling, knowing you can stay as long as you want.

—Jay Reill

Stats: S.V. *Atlantic Clipper*

Phone: (011 61) 7 4031 1288

Fax: (011 61) 7 4031 1373

E-mail: dudive@ozemail.com.au

Website: www.ozemail.com.au/~dudive

Size: 140-foot sailing tall ship

Capacity: 43 passengers

a/c: yes

Restaurant: Chef-prepared meals

Number of dives per day: 4

Night dives: yes

Oxygen on board: yes

Radio on board: yes

Nearest medical personnel: Cairns

Nearest recompression chamber: Townsville

Weather: Tropical

Water temperature: Tropical

Rental equipment: Included in package

Certification: Open Water to Instructor

Certification agencies: SSI, PADI

Prices: Packages start at \$250 per diver for 2 days/1 night. \$160 for non-divers. 3 days/2 nights for \$375 per diver and \$260 for non-divers.

• Voyages •

Undersea Explorer

"Adventure is a human need, we recognize it as the daring thing which makes us bigger than our usual selves..." —Walt Burnett, *The Spirit of Adventure*

Remember watching Jacques Cousteau on the *Calypso*? People with marvelous accents plunged into the deep while we sat transfixed by footage of colorful and improbable underwater adventure. Hey, wasn't that the reason you started diving in the first place? Didn't you always want to go there and do that?

Well, now you can, on Australia's *Undersea Explorer*. Specifically designed for adventure diving, underwater exploration and research, the *UE* combines the best of all three along the Great Barrier Reef.

Sailing out of Port Douglas, the *UE* has marine biologists as part of an experienced and knowledgeable crew, and usually guest researchers working

on the many scientific projects the boat facilitates.

The Great Barrier Reef is one of the most diverse marine environments in the world, and the folks onboard are dedicated to providing you with adventure as well as furthering research and your awareness of a truly unique ecosystem.

Built in 1990, the 82-foot, 10-cabin, 5-bathroom vessel holds no more than 20 people, and features chef-prepared food, assuring you cozy and comfortable surroundings.

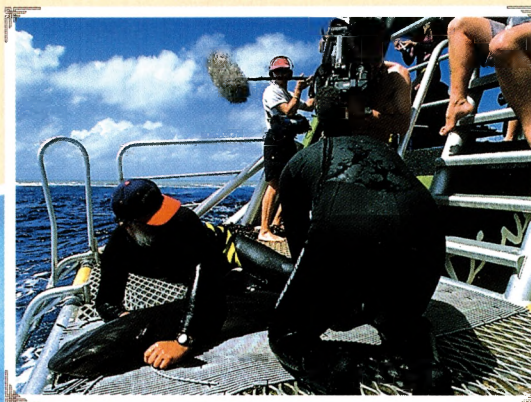
EXPEDITIONS

- Minke Whales
- Sharks
- Shipwreck Archaeology
- Octopus & Nautilus
- Coral Reef Reproduction

to where the action is, depending on the season and the moment. When we see something interesting, it's nice if divers are experienced enough to get into the water NOW." 'Interesting' includes a recent session of 10 hours of snorkeling with Minke Whales.

After six days on the *Undersea Explorer*, you'll certainly be able to bask in the after-glow of an adventure

—Clara Weygandt



You'll dive the breathtaking Ribbon Reefs, see Pixie pinnacle [a macro-photographers dream] and the world famous Cod Hole. This is where you can experience what one guide book describes as "...sensory

overload." No kidding!

UE also goes to Osprey reef, an oceanic reef with 130 feet of visibility, and 3000 foot vertical walls. The *Ue* is well equipped to give you the full experience, with 2 inflatables, digital video and microscope—you can view the sights in the water, on the screen or under the scope.

This trip is for advanced divers, although the crew takes plenty of time to help you help yourself in the water. "This is not a milkrun," says Andy Dunstan, operations manager and research coordinator, "We try to go

From whale tagging to nautilus tracking, the *UE* can get you mask-to-face with the marine world's most interesting moments



Stats: Undersea Explorer

Phone: (011 61) 740 514 777
 Fax: (011 61) 740 514 888
 USA: 800 388 7333
 E-mail: adventures@adventures.com.au
 Web: www.adventures.com.au
 Size: 82 feet
 Capacity: 20 passengers
 Facilities: 2 diving boats, separate lecture room, video and TV, marine library with computer CD ROM, dive computers, microscope linked to TV, 5 toilets and showers
 a/c: yes
 Restaurant: Fresh-cooked meals prepared by on-board chef
 Number of dives per day: 4
 Night dives: yes
 Oxygen on board: yes
 Radio on board: yes/ satellite phone
 Nearest medical personnel: RDF by telephone
 Nearest recompression chamber: Townsville
 Weather: Tropical
 Water temperature: 73° - 86° F
 Rental equipment: yes
 Prices: High season: June 27 - January 31, from US\$1320.00; Low Season February 01 - June 26, from US\$1150.00
 Travel Insurance: Recommended

Dive Easy

Liveaboard Vacations



Peter Hughes Diving
INC.

First and Foremost in Luxury Liveaboard Adventure

1-800-9 DANCER

BAY ISLANDS / BELIZE / PALAU / PAPUA NEW GUINEA / RED SEA / TURKS & CAICO ISLANDS

Work Hard,



Leave your stressful worries behind and wake up to morning coffee service and a sumptuous breakfast buffet. Relax while our crew describes the first dive site of the day. Slip into your gear and take a giant stride into paradise. When you come back up, the deck crew awaits with a helping hand and a fresh warm towel. Dive easy with a choice of seven luxury liveaboard cruises in six exciting destinations. All of my liveaboard vessels set the highest standards in comfort, service, amenities and the dive experience itself.

Dive Easy.



With services and amenities designed to enhance your safety, enjoyment and ease, my goal is to create the ideal environment for the best dive excursion of your life. Whether you choose to explore the underwater marvels of the Caribbean, the Pacific or the Red Sea, with a Peter Hughes liveaboard experience, we hope you'll be saying **you've never had it so easy.**



For more information, phone, fax, or check-out our web site.



Peter Hughes Diving INC.

1-800-9 DANCER 1-800-932-6237

First and Foremost in Luxury Liveaboard Adventure

1390 S. Dixie Hwy. / Suite 1109 / Coral Gables / Florida 33146 / 305-669-9391 / Fax 305-669-9475



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CHECK OUR INTERNET SITE FOR PERIODIC SPECIALS

Internet: <http://www.peterhughes.com>

e-mail: dancer@peterhughes.com

• Voyages •

Wind Surf

Come sail away in style to the a Caribbean that's "180 degrees from ordinary."

Chances are you wouldn't be reading this if you didn't want to dive on your next vacation. But let's face it; there's more to travel than just diving (our apologies to the dive fanatics). Take things like five-star accommodations, wonderful food, great service, room service, hot tubs, a salon and spa. Then add a chance to sail with bona fide celebrities.

Look no further. Sail with the Stars, one of America's most recognized multi-award winning Fantasy theme vacation companies, has a vacation for you.

Sail with the Stars and Windstar Cruises presents an unmatched travel opportunity—a diving adventure

wrapped in the ambiance of a luxury sailing vacation and hosted by a celebrity couple.

Join the remarkable modern sailing ship *Wind Surf*, a new 617-foot luxury cruise ship that plies tropical coasts and offbeat islands with one

have ocean views, TVs and VCRs, CD players and mini-bars. The ship's library contains more than 500 CDs and videos for you to borrow while on board. And there's a full amenities spa on board for massage, spa baths, fitness consultation, aqua aerobics, yoga, and more.

Service is first-rate and friendly. Leave your ties and formal gowns at home. There's no formal nights, no assigned seating at dinner, no bingo nights, no glitz and glamour. Just great food, great service, and great accommodations. Oh yes, and diving—lots of it.

The itinerary selection by Sail with the Stars departs November 15, 1998 and includes Barbados, Tobago Cays, Tobago, Grenada, Martinique, and St. Lucia. The celebrity couple host has not been selected yet, but on past trips, guests have traveled with the A List of child stars, such as Jonathan Taylor Thomas and the adorable Olsen twins among many other notables. Now that Sail with the Stars is expanding into adult travel, you can count on the A List of adult stars, too.

Aboard the *Wind Surf* a fully trained staff provides dive instruction, resort certification and guided certified dives. Up to four dive tenders ferry you to your dive sites, which can be spectacular reef dives or wall dives. Dive equipment—tanks, regulators, masks, fins, weights, etc.—is carried on-board so you don't need to bring anything.

Sail with the Stars offers a perfect vacation for "mixed" couples (one diver and one non-diver). Divers enjoy mornings dazzled by rainbows of coral and bouquets of reef fish. Non-divers can relax on deck for a leisurely breakfast. Later, both can enjoy a hot tub and sauna, a quiet afternoon on a small portion of the *Wind Surf's* more than 15,000 square feet of teak deck space, chatting with your celebrity host,

The Wind Surf offers the best of both worlds: great opportunities for diving and luxurious, five-star amenities for when you're above the surface.

or a tour of the Caribbean island port for that day.

Sail with the Stars prides itself on excellence and knowing how to offer something for everyone. So, if you're looking for a week of diving—and a week of pampering on the high seas—give Sail with the Stars a call.

—Clara Weygandt

Sail With The Stars

Name of boat: Wind Surf

Phone: (818) 999 3696, or (800) 942 2287 (outside California)

Fax: (818) 999 5697

E-mail: crustars@ix.netcom.com

Website: www.sailwiththestars.com/dive

Size: 617 feet

Capacity: 312 passengers

Facilities: 30 of the suites have 2 bathrooms, H/C, A/C, ensuite bathrooms, TV/VCR and CD in room, Jacuzzi, sauna. The spa offers massage, aromatherapy and more, fitness center, outdoor swimming pools, 24-hour cabin service, other water sports including waterskiing, windsurfing, kayaking. **Restaurant:** A restaurant and bistro, both with menus designed by Joachim Splichal of Patina Restaurant, Los Angeles (#1 restaurant according to Zagat).

Number of dives per day: 2

Night dives: no

Oxygen/Radio on board: yes/yes

Nearest medical personnel: Ship's infirmary

Nearest recompression chamber:

Barbados/Martinique

Weather: Tropical

Water temperature: 70's to 80's

Rental equipment: yes

Prices: 7-day packages start at \$2,200 per person.



After an energetic foray into the marine world, enjoy gourmet cuisine in the Veranda Cafe or in the comfort of your private stateroom.

distinguishable feature: five masts and 26,800 feet of unfurled white sail.

Ranked as the number two small cruise line in the world by Conde Nast

Traveler magazine, Windstar Cruises offers a five-star cruise experience in a casual, laid-back manner. Cabins all

• Voyages •

Madivaru 7

Plunge into the magically clear waters of the MALDIVES in the Indian Ocean...

Strung like a chain of pearls across the azure velvet of the Indian Ocean, the Maldives have all the allure of the classic desert island.

Clear blue water, white sand, and green palms. Add a beautiful boat, luxurious accommodations, unlimited diving, and great food and you come close to tropical paradise.

The Maldives are an independent nation consisting of over 1,100 islands, many of them small and remote. Even though the government limits tourist access, the Maldives are one of the premier dive spots in the world, with innumerable atolls teeming with colorful marine life. This combination of factors makes a live-aboard the perfect way to explore this exquisite archipelago.

The fish here are fantastic. Visitors have described them as both curious and vibrant.

We had a school of jacks in the hundreds in crystal-blue water. We had pink sailfin leaffish." Some of the larger species include stingrays, barracudas and tuna. Not only that, the fish are extra-ordinarily tame. According to those who've been, this is *the* place to go for underwater photography. More than one underwater photographer has said it's some of the best material in the world.

So what are you waiting for? Seafari Adventures has operated in the Maldives for the past 10 years, and specializes in plush accommodations, plus an experienced knowledge of the best dive spots. Seafari Adventure's live-aboard *Madivaru 7* is truly enchanting. Built in 1995, this 100-foot long, 35-foot wide yacht is a dream for divers and non-divers alike. Three sun decks, for when you want to soak up the rays. Two 45-foot diving boats to ferry you to incredible dive spots. Diving instructors. Wrecks and night dives. Swimming and snorkeling. With a friendly and accommodating crew, eight spacious cabins with private toilets and showers, and teak interior,

it's a pleasure to be aboard. Of course there is a special area for underwater photographers and videographers, as well as E-6 processing.

All of which adds up to make the *Madivaru 7* everything you could want in the middle of a sweet blue equatorial nowhere.

—Clara Weygandt

Madivaru 7 is 100-feet of liveaboard perfection

Carl Roessler enthuses on his web page: "We had manta rays. We had seven hundred-pound groupers.



A quick tour of the boat, clockwise: great views on deck, luxurious lounge, cabin and bathroom; custom camera table for photographers



Stats: *Madivaru 7*

To discover the beautiful Maldives aboard the *Madivaru 7*, contact your major wholesalers in North America.

E-mail: seafari_maldives@iol.it

Web: www.divetravel.net/seafari.adventures

Size: 100 feet

Capacity: 16 passengers

Facilities: Two 45-foot dive boats, H/C water, TV and VCR, private toilets and showers.

a/c: yes

Restaurant: Continental and Oriental cuisine, with lots of fish, fruits and vegetables

Number of dives per day: 4

Night dives: yes

Oxygen on board: yes

Radio on board: yes

Nearest medical personnel: A few hours away

Nearest recompression chamber: A few hours away

Weather: 82–92° all year

Water temperature: 85–90° all year

Rental equipment: yes

Prices: \$300 per day per passenger

• Voyages •

Manthiri

*"Look stranger, at this island now
The leaping light of your delight discovers"*

—W.H. Auden

There is, one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea, whose gently awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath... — *Moby Dick*, Herman Melville.

A voyage aboard the *Manthiri* offers a rare glimpse into the hidden soul of the sea. Like jewels studded into a belt of clear turquoise, the 1,190 islands of the Maldives stretch elegantly along the Equator, where the Indian Ocean offers clear, warm waters and thriving reefs.

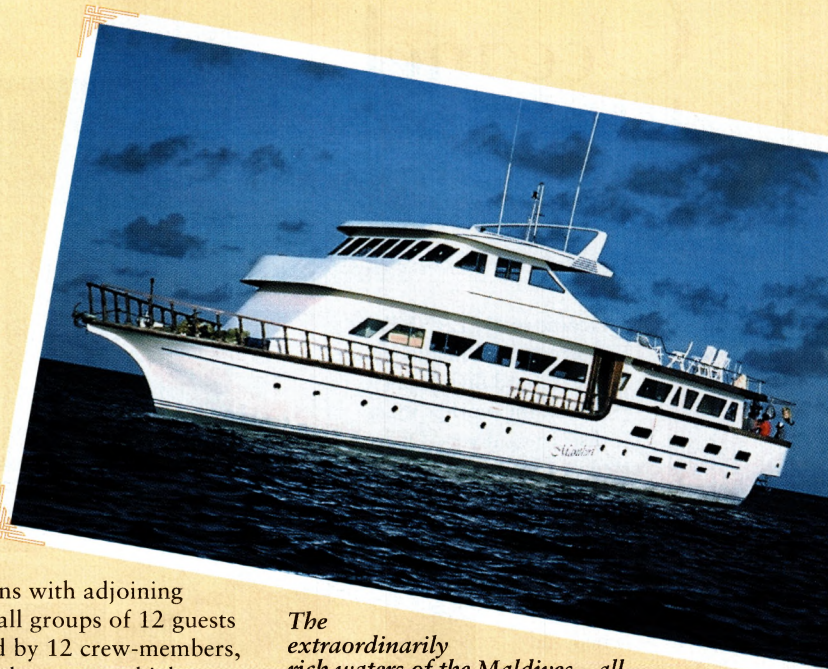
With only 199 inhabited islands, the Maldives are a relatively

to the Maldives. The 85-foot vessel features four twin cabins, each with an ensuite bathroom, and two double cabins with adjoining bath-rooms. Small groups of 12 guests are accompanied by 12 crew-members, an arrangement that ensures high service standards. Guest cabins have fans, bedside reading lights, controlled air conditioning, and hot and cold running water. For added comfort, the *Manthiri* runs in tandem with an additional vessel, a 36-foot dhoni designed to store dive gear and supplies.

The *Manthiri's* Maldivian chef prepares fresh meals daily. Pasta, curry, seafood and fruits are a few of the delicacies guests enjoy between dives. An onboard watermaker ensures that there is plenty of fresh, clean water for all.

Because the *Manthiri's* ten-day, nine-night live-aboard expeditions cover between 200 and 250 miles, guests have plenty of time to dive the best sites and explore the islands. Guests may visit the Maldives' capital, Male, where the golden-domed Grand Friday Mosque stands as a centerpiece of Maldivian culture. An on-shore barbecue at a secluded island gives divers a chance to sample the local cuisine and discover private beaches and lagoons. And, of course, there are plenty of opportunities to dive....

Beneath the sea's surface, the Maldives harbor valleys, plateaus, caves and plains absolutely teeming with life. Comprised mostly of coral, the Maldives are home to sharks, manta rays, turtles and a plethora of large and small tropical fish. With large

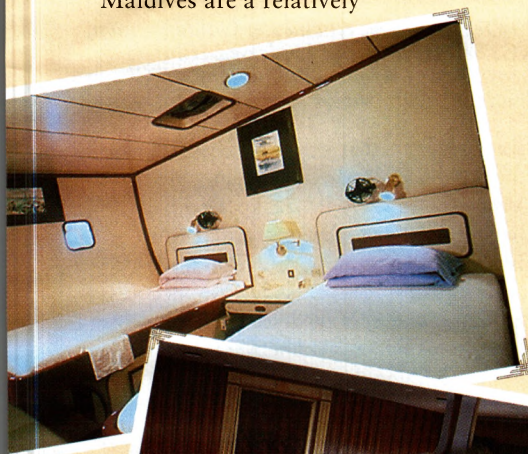


The extraordinarily rich waters of the Maldives—all yours from the 85-foot Manthiri

80- or 90-cubic foot air tanks, each of the *Manthiri's* three to four dives a day can last up to an hour. Psychedelic colors, visibility as high as 200 feet and warm waters keep divers coming back for more.

Take a look into the soul of the sea aboard the *Manthiri*. See for yourself why Marco Polo called the Maldives "the flower of the Indies" and the writer, Ibn Batuta, called her "one of the wonders of the world."

—Heather Cantwell



A roomy double-bed state room (top), the lounging area with bar (below)

unexploited microcosm. Along these coasts, Islamic fishing villages exist harmoniously with palm-fringed beaches, sprawling expanses of coral, luxuriant vegetation and secluded lagoons.

Built in 1994, the *Manthiri* is uniquely equipped to introduce divers

Stats: *Manthiri*

Phone: (800) 247 3483; (206) 441 3483

Fax: (206) 441 5431

Length: 80 foot

Capacity: 12

Facilities: private bathrooms; separate vessel for carrying equipment

a/c: yes

Restaurant: freshly cooked meals

Number of dives per day: 3-4

Night dives: yes

Oxygen on board: yes

Radio on board: yes

Nearest medical personnel: local resort

Nearest recompression chamber: local resort

Weather: tropical

Water temperature: 77°-86°F

Prices: Only \$2250 for 10 day/9 night cruise, including meals. From \$3625 for cruise, including meals and airfare from SFO or LAX.

• Voyages •

Oceanet

Ocean Explorers Adventure Network

"The seas are the heart's blood of the earth. Plucked up and kneaded by the sun and moon ..." —Henry Beston

Welcome to OCEANET, an international alliance of top live-aboard dive boats formed to link the world's most discerning divers. OCEANET was created in 1997 to guarantee serious and enthusiastic divers unparalleled travel experiences in the finest destinations. Each OCEANET vessel is independent—owned and personally operated by dedicated divers who made their wildest dreams about exploring the sea come true. All of the operators in the alliance share the distinction of having sophisticated dive travelers from around the globe rate each boat in OCEANET as one of the best for offering unique adventure, intrinsic beauty and genuine camaraderie.

So what does this mean for you? The OCEANET team can offer more to it's clients than a single live-aboard can. Once you dive with one OCEANET vessel you are automatically a member of the OCEANET club and entitled to generous discounts, priority bookings and other privileges on every OCEANET vessel. The OCEANET website is a direct link to all the alliance boats and their owners. It keeps you updated with special events and trip schedules, client comments, local conditions and natural history as well as being a forum for communicating with

fellow diving enthusiasts. Every

operator in OCEANET is committed to discovery, exploration and conservation: discovering the truths of the vast unknown ocean realm, exploring the raw culture of remote locales, conserving the marine environment through scientific research and education programs that divers can contribute to as field workers, photographers and keen observers.

If you are looking for more than just another dive trip, OCEANET is the place to begin your search. OCEANET knows that a live-aboard journey is a total experience full of mystery and wonder that doesn't begin and end with your dive. It's also the unique qualities of the place, the people, the culture, the marine life and your companions. So what are you waiting for? Come aboard and see what OCEANET has to offer.

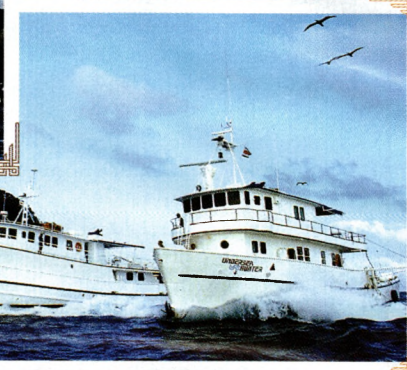
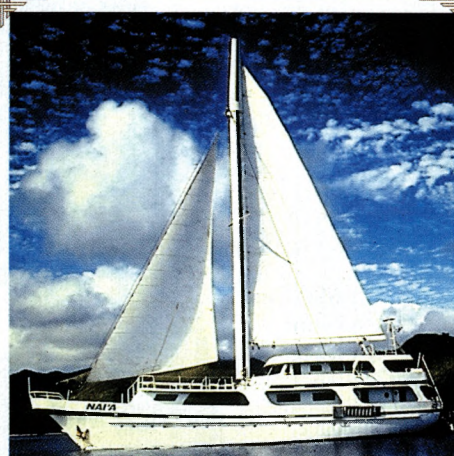
OCEANET's founding vessels are *Ocean Hunter* in Palau, *Golden Dawn* in Papua New Guinea, *NAI'A* in Fiji and *Undersea Hunter* & *Sea Hunter* in Cocos Island, Costa Rica. Starting in the East, *Ocean Hunter*, an intimate boat for only

The Oceanet fleet, clockwise: Golden Dawn, PNG; Sea Hunter and Undersea Hunter, Cocos; Ocean Hunter, Palau; Nai'a, Fiji Islands. Far left: divers with rebreathers.

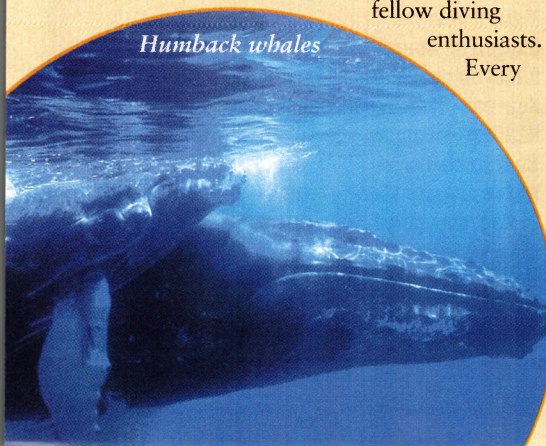
six passengers that will introduce you to the exceptionally diverse waters of Palau. Visit a land-locked tidal lake filled with harmless jellyfish, the spectacular Rock Islands, sheer walls, World War II wrecks and soft coral reefs. Designed to accommodate serious divers, *Ocean Hunter* is small and maneuverable enough to position you directly over the sites on moorings.

Moving south-west, we come to *Golden Dawn* in the must-dive waters of Papua New Guinea. One report describes these rich dive sites where "flora & fauna muscle each other for space within the lush undersea garden." *Golden Dawn* travels to a variety of regions within the country to ensure each season's best conditions in famous destinations like Milne Bay, Eastern Fields and Madang. The crew is experienced and enthusiastic about their many dive sites. And exploration in Papua New Guinea's wilder corners using Nitrox and rebreathers has uncovered more world-class marine experiences such as manta ray feeding and cleaning stations.

The heavenly Fiji Islands is the home territory of the elegant motor-sailer, *NAI'A*. Run by captain Rob Barrel and his family with a focus on personalized



Humpback whales

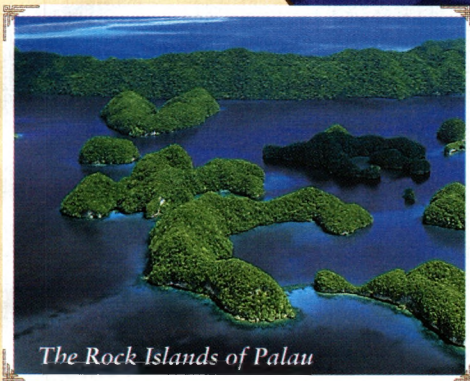
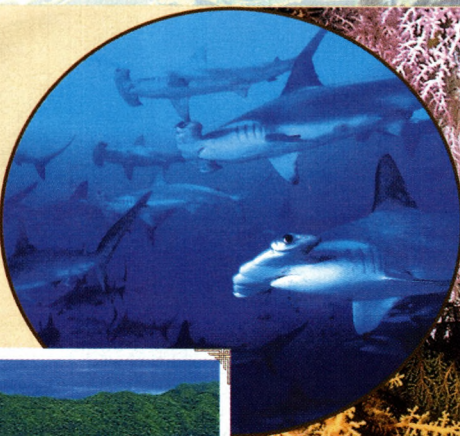


• Voyages •

PACIFIC

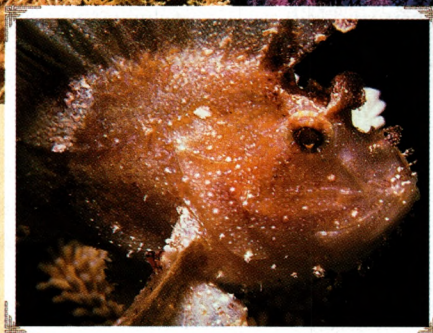
service and breathtaking photo opportunities, a trip aboard the *NAI'A* is like a journey to a home away from home. Known as the world's best soft coral reef destination, Fiji is also a fish watchers delight—either in the shallows among curtains of the small and vibrantly colored or in current-flushed channels surrounded by schools of sharks and pelagics. Look closer and the coral reef will reveal a bevy of bizarre critters including ghost pipefish, flashlight fish, blue ribbon eels and rare nudibranchs. *NAI'A*'s crew and passengers work closely with the University of the South Pacific in several coral reef research programs.

The west-coast of Costa Rica is a gateway to mystery and paradise. Cocos is an idyllic uninhabited island a day and a half sail off the coast, boasting some of the most dramatic underwater events and abundant marine life in the world—hammerheads, mantas, schooling pelagics and whales. It takes a strong and



The Rock Islands of Palau

specialized ship to reach Cocos comfortably. Conceived, built and operated by Avi Klapfer and Yosy Naaman, both the *Undersea Hunter* and *Sea Hunter* are uniquely qualified for this demanding job. *Undersea Hunter* was used for 20 years as



Clockwise: Enjoy schooling hammerheads off Cocos Island plus soft coral reefs and bizarre macro creatures in the South Pacific.

a research vessel before being completely refurbished as a diving and film crew support vessel in 1990. While the newer

Sea Hunter is a superbly stable and spacious vessel with everything a serious diver/photographer could wish for.

Both *NAI'A* and *Sea Hunter* host humpback whale charters during tropical mating and birthing

seasons. *NAI'A* travels to Tonga in July/August and *Sea Hunter* is based in Silverbank from January through March. These expeditions are an opportunity for divers to not only swim alongside and photograph these fascinating giants but also to assist with the scientific research into their curious behavior and complex biology.

Every OCEANET operator has an extensive website that showcases the complete itinerary and facilities on offer plus a direct email address for inquiries. Go to www.oceanet.net and begin your next diving expedition. Or consult your preferred travel agent.

—Clara Weygandt

Golden Dawn

Phone: (011 675) 325 6500
Fax: (011 675) 325 0302
E-mail: goldendawn@oceanet.net
Web: www.mvgoldendawn.com
Size: 80 feet
Capacity: 10 passengers
Restaurant: Fresh, chef-prepared meals daily.
Number of dives per day: 3-5
Night dives: yes
Oxygen on board: yes
Radio on board: yes
Handicapped Accessible: To some degree, with assistance.
Prices: \$3,195 US per diver for an 11-day, 10-night cruise

NAI'A

Phone: (011 679) 450 382
Fax: (011 679) 450 566
E-mail: naia@oceanet.net
Web: www.naia.com.fj
Size: 120 ft.
Capacity: 18 passengers
Restaurant: Fresh, first-class

food, complementary fine wine, special diets catered to.
Number of dives per day: 4-5
Night dives: yes
Oxygen on board: Yes. Lots
Radio on board: Yes
Prices: 6.5 dive days: \$2,305 per person; 9.5 dive days: \$3,295 per person

Ocean Hunter

Phone: (011 680) 488 3626
Fax: (011 680) 488 1725 & 488 5326
E-mail: oceanhunter@oceanet.net
Web: www.oceanhunter.com
Size: 60-foot steel motor sailor
Capacity: 6 passengers
Restaurant: fresh gourmet health food.
Number of dives per day: unlimited
Night dives: yes
Oxygen on board: yes
Radio on board: yes
Prices: High Season: November-July: \$2195-\$2395 per person for 7 days; 10-14 days available.
Low Season: 25% off

Sea Hunter/Undersea Hunter

Phone: (011 506) 228 6535
Fax: (011 506) 289 7334
E-mail: underseahunter@oceanet.net
Web: www.underseahunter.com
Size: 115 feet/90 feet
Capacity: 18/14
Number of dives per day: 3
Night dives: yes upon request
Oxygen on board: yes
Radio on board: yes
Prices: Cocos: \$3075 (11 days)
Silverbank: \$2345 (11 days)

All members of Oceanet have lots of information on their websites. For all the details you possibly need, just log on, or, contact them directly.

• Voyages •

Exploring Asia

Maluku Adventures offers three live-aboards that will spirit you away to some of the best diving in the Pacific. SEA CONTACTS I hosts Indonesia, and M/Y NAUTIKA explores the waters of the Philippines, while SCUBA QUEST opens the door to Thailand. All promise comfort and value, as well as a unique travel experience.

At the center of Indonesia's clear warm waters, lush green islands, white sands and gazillions of critters, beats the planetary heart of biodiversity. The waters here are so rich, in fact, that biologists are still finding new species.

If you're a serious diver, and Indonesia is where you want to go, then a *Sea Contacts I* trip is the choice for you. *Sea*

Contacts I has just created a program that takes you to the tropical islands off Northeast Kalimantan. *Sea Contacts I* is the only live-aboard

Left and below: relax on one of the classic sun decks. Built in the traditional 'Pinisi' manner, *Sea Contacts I* takes you across Indonesia in romance and style.

that services this area of Indonesia.

But that's only a fraction of the story. According to one writer, *Sea Contacts I* dives "outrageously rich and varied sites. . . including an inland marine lake. . ." Beyond that, there's Sangalaki Island, known as the world capitol of mantas, as well as boasting outstanding reef, wall and cave diving.

All this, of course, would be sufficient, but there's more; *Sea Contacts I* makes the journey in style. One look at the traditional Pinisi sailing boat, and you'll think you've stepped into a Patrick O'Brian novel. With huge dark sails, almost acres of polished teak and woven rattan, you'll be surrounded by romance as well as great diving. But don't let the exterior fool you, this ship was

designed for divers by divers and has all the amenities, including dedicated dive deck, storage lockers, two Zodiac tenders and experienced dive crew. In addition, *Sea Contacts I* offers shoreside day-trips, dishes up awesome food, and will paddle you through a separate sea kayaking program.

Welcome to the Philippines," four simple words that multiply exponentially—to more than 7,000 tropical islands, with

Left: the feel of Indonesia is everywhere—down to the decor in the dining room.

reefs, walls and wrecks all within a diver's reach. Especially if you're on M/Y *Nautika*, the comfortable live-aboard that is one of the finest ways to dive the

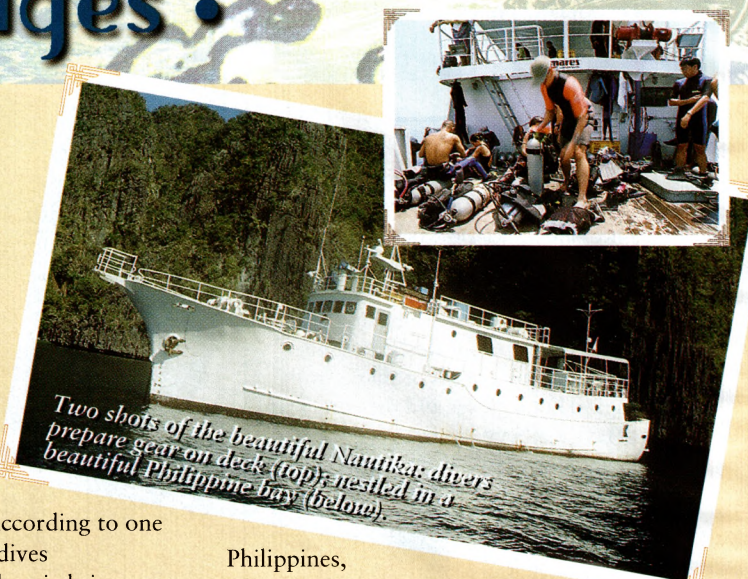
Philippines, offering trips to a variety of dive sites. Equipped with six cabins with ensuite bathrooms, *Nautika* sails to the Sulu Sea, and Tubbataha Reefs, a World Heritage site. In this protected area, check out the pelagics—sharks, mantas and barracudas. One survey at Tubbataha recorded a startling 300 coral species, as well as 379 species of fish. If you don't have a lot of time, but still want great diving, go

A quick tour of the boat, clockwise: the *Queen Marine*; comfortable beds and luxury bathrooms, all given an exclusive touch by custom wood interior.

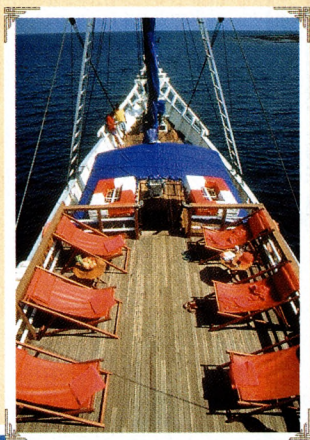
for a shorter trip to Batangas, Philippines.

Marine mammals—dwarf sperm whales, spinner dolphins and pilot whales—are prevalent inside the bay. Clear waters and abundance of marine life make the internationally renowned site a must-dive destination.

The M/Y *Nautika* ensures you get the best of your vacation, catering to every need, offering unusual shore excursions to turtle nurseries and hot springs, and setting the table with Oriental and Continental cuisine. If wrecks are what float your boat (so to speak!), the

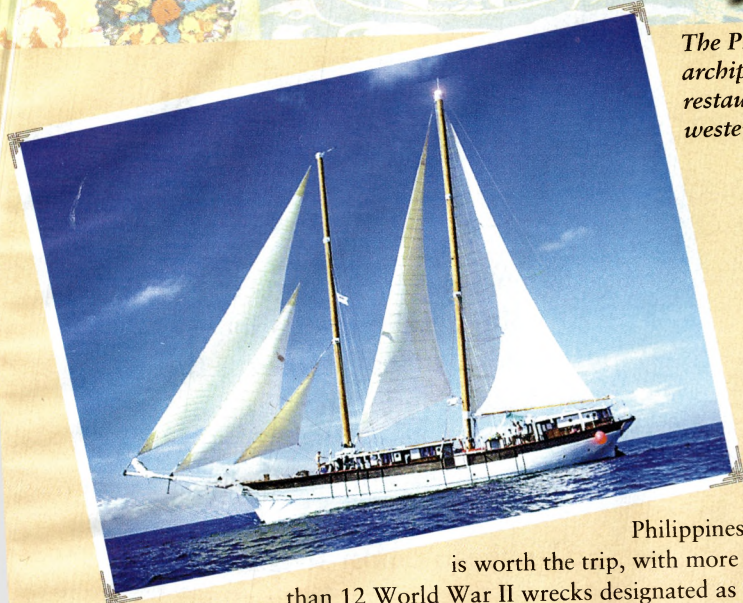


Two shots of the beautiful *Nautika*: divers prepare gear on deck (top); nestled in a beautiful Philippine bay (below).



• Voyages •

THE EAST ASIA



The Phoenix (left), in the Similan archipelago. Right: Phoenix' restaurant serving Thai and western food specialties.



Philippines is worth the trip, with more than 12 World War II wrecks designated as dive sites. Depending on the time of year, *M/Y Nautika* sails to three different areas in this archipelago. Each offers world-class diving, and no matter which you choose, you'll come home enriched by the colors, sights and sounds of the beneficent tropics.

...

And what about a homebase for diving the spectacular, turquoise waters of Thailand, which are also justifiably famous for marine biodiversity? Look no further than Scuba

Quest Diving Center on Phuket Island. Scuba Quest is dedicated to creating first-rate diving vacations, with an emphasis on environmental protection and diving instruction. Operating two boats, the *Queen Marine* and the *Phoenix*, Scuba Quest offers lots of options for both novice and experienced divers. As we all know, diving from a live-aboard saves travel time to remote sites—and you spend more time actually in the water. And what water this is! Cruising the Similan archipelago, Scuba Quest's live-aboards tour through the nine islands, visiting more than 20 dive sites renowned for their soft corals, sea fans and more. Another Scuba Quest destination, the Sirin Islands, have plenty of those winged masters of the deep—mantas, while at Richelieu Rock, watch the whale sharks in season. In addition, there are numerous fabulous dive sites a mere 10 minutes from the Scuba Quest homebase.

Scuba Quest offers instruction from Basic Skin Diver to Open Water Instructor. They

also offer a free buoyancy workshop and maintain a strict no-collect/no-touch policy on their cruises. It's a policy that protects Scuba Quest guests, and also the diverse and fragile marine environment of the Andaman Sea.

Both the *Phoenix* and the *Queen Marine* carry 18 passengers, and have ensuite baths.

The *Phoenix* was built in 1910... 1995-97, while the

Queen Marine was built in 1991 and designed especially for divers. You can spend your day diving,

waterskiing or snorkeling, and return to a spacious boat and fresh Thai food. Scuba Quest is a wonderful way to experience the

Sea Contacts I

Size: 112 feet
Capacity: 12 passengers
Facilities: 5 cabins, 4 heads. H/C, photo workstation, TV, VCR, stereo, 3 sun decks, 2 Zodiacs. Nitrox, rebreathers, wrecks, eco tours and marine bio.
a/c: yes
Restaurant: Indonesian and western cuisine
Number of dives per day: unlimited
Night dives: yes
Oxygen on board: yes
Radio on board: yes
Nearest medical personnel: On-board PADI instructor, DAN sponsor and member.
Nearest recompression chamber: Singapore or Bali
Weather: Tropical
Water temperature: Tropical
Rental equipment: yes, full line available
Prices: 7-day or 8-day voyages US \$150 per day, inclusive. Valid through June 1998. Ask about group and charter rates.

Nautika

Size: 100 feet
Capacity: 16 passengers

Facilities: 2 quad cabins and 4 doubles; ensuite bathrooms. H/C. Two 23-foot tenders. Separate camera tables and storage. Basic Nitrox to Trimix courses. EANx fills. Eco tours and marine bio.
a/c: yes
Restaurant: Oriental and Continental cuisine, with plenty of fruit.
Number of dives per day: unlimited
Night dives: yes
Oxygen on board: yes
Radio on board: yes
Nearest medical personnel: Sabu City/Manila
Nearest recompression chamber: Sabu City/Manila
Weather: Tropical
Water temperature: High 70's to low 80's
Rental equipment: yes
Prices: From \$120 pp per night to \$250 pp per night, depending on the destination. Valid through Oct. 1998.

Phoenix and Queen Marine

Size: Phoenix: 125 feet, Queen Marine: 78 feet
Capacity: Phoenix: 18 passengers, Queen Marine: 10 passengers

Facilities: Phoenix: 6 double and 2 triple cabins. Queen Marine: 5 double cabins, plus upgraded doubles for '98/'99 season. Both boats H/C, marine bio/eco tours, and wrecks.
a/c: yes
Restaurant: Fresh Thai and western food
Number of dives per day: 4
Night dives: yes
Oxygen on board: yes
Radio on board: yes
Nearest medical personnel: Phuket Island
Nearest recompression chamber: Paton Beach, Phuket Island
Weather: tropical
Water temperature: Low 80's
Rental equipment: yes
Prices: Phoenix: 5 days, \$240 US per day. Queen Marine: 3 days, \$150 per person per day. High Nov-May. Low Season: \$100 per person per day.

For more information, call 1 800 2560 or toll-free 1 800 666 2585. Fax: 1 800 2560. E-mail: info@nautika.com

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To learn more about a Windjammer 6 or 13 day dive vacation call your travel agent or

1-800-327-2601.

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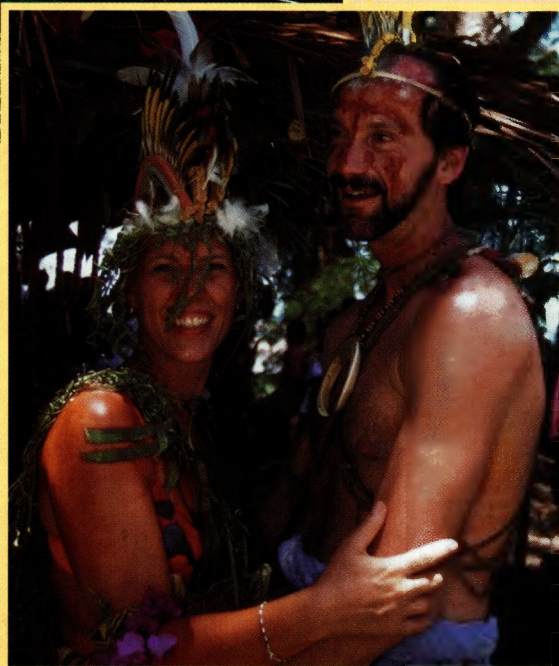
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Windjammer
P.O. BOX 1901

Wedding at Walindi



Michele Westmorland



Tammy Poliso

Two westerners return to their island love of Papua New Guinea to marry, in the local tradition.... the wedding story of Stuart and Michele Westmorland.

The sun rose over the silenced volcanoes. Parrots stirred in the palms, warmed awake by morning light. Bits of transparent ocean lapped at unmarred sand expanses. And she walked alone with bare feet to watch the day emerge.

It was a Friday by business calendars, but it was just today on the southwestern hem of the Pacific Rim. It was a today that would mark the rest of all her days, and she had traveled 10,000 miles to find herself here. Papua New Guinea, amongst the Siassi tribe of Lae and the Bougainville tribe, was the place she had chosen to begin her life anew—with him.

“Mo’ning.” The deep tones were accompanied by a brilliant smile from a village boy greeting her in pidgin. Startled out of her reverie, the shortening palm shadows urged her not to miss breakfast, and she hurried to the plantation’s main dining room to join the others.

Gifts from Kimbe Bay

You don't have to be on your honeymoon to enjoy the diving of Kimbe Bay in Papua New Guinea. Our wedding journey marked our third trip to this magic country, and each time we witnessed the bounty beneath the surface of the Bismarck Sea. We revisited some of the most famous dive sites—Christine's, Susan's and Inglis Shoals—and made some new discoveries as well.

Though El Niño has warmed waters at home on the U.S. West Coast, the usually tropical seas surrounding Papua New Guinea are chilled by his effects, and the marine life inhabiting PNG's waters has changed as well. "In over 20 years, I've rarely seen harlequin ghost fish," claims Max Benjamin, owner of Walindi Plantation. Now the seafans and black corals—oak tree structures large enough to dwarf the human form—harbor small groups of these delicate little mimics. They blend in so perfectly that it takes diligent patience to locate the sea-horse-like creatures.

Christine's Reef has a gully full of elephant-sized red and orange sea fans that are mind-boggling. If the pipefish hiding there don't show themselves, the myriad of longnose hawkfish, gobies and coral crabs are sure to take the stage. Susan's Reef is noted for its pink and red sea whips—gently waving back and forth in the current, the polyps are open and extended to grasp the tiny, nourishing plankton. Razorfish, heads down, travel between the sea whips in groups of 20 or more.

With sensational sunshine throughout our stay, we were never disappointed with our ventures to other well-known reefs of Walindi. South Emma, Vanessa's and Lumu each have their own special treats to share. The marine life is endless—be it big sea life or delicate miniatures, there is something to fascinate even the most discriminating diver. On the deeper portions of these reefs, divers can see sharks on the hunt through schools of trevally. Tuna are also stalkers of the reef, swooping in through the baitfish. Above the reef hang large barracuda and batfish that swirl and move gracefully with the clear blue current. Multi-colored anemones carpet the tops of the reefs, accompanied, as always, by several species of clown fish. Bright vermilion spine cheek clowns, white-bonnet and blue-banded anemonefish valiantly defend their territory, occasionally nipping at passing divers.

On our visit the year before, we had a special treat when Benjamin of Walindi Plantation towed us through the water to view and play with spinner dolphins—he has a remarkable little invention that allows his guests to comfortably ride in a safety net alongside the dive boat. We were convinced it was an experience that couldn't be topped....until the day at Christine's Reef. In the distance we could see the surface boiling with activity. Tails and fins thrashed about, but we were unsure what was going on. As we approached, we saw two distinctly different types of whales—a pod of sperm whales encircled by a pack of orcas. Were the orcas hunting for a weak or sick calf? With adrenaline pumping through our veins, we slipped stealthily into the water. Upon our entry, the orcas vanished, leaving our questions regarding their intent unanswered. The sperm whales remained, appearing not to be too disturbed by either the orcas or our close proximity. No less than a dozen socializing females were stacked together like cordwood. Squid parts and sloughed skin floated by as we swam to the pod, cameras poised. We were only ten feet away from the gray masses, their open mouths showing teeth lined up on a narrow jaw. A few minutes later, they gracefully moved off. Though orca sightings have been documented by divers over the years, ours was the first in-water encounter with sperm whales anyone at Walindi Plantation had heard of.

Once again, Papua New Guinea surprised us with an unbelievable experience. We can only wonder what will happen next time we visit. One thing's sure—the diving will be, as always, superb.

— Michele and Stuart Westmorland

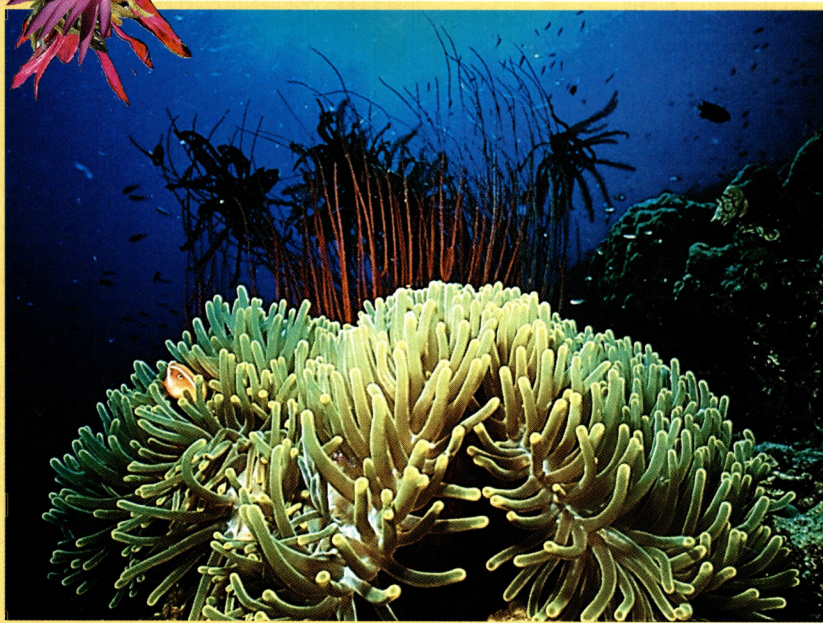


Tommy Paluso

Today had hovered over his every waking moment since last fall. For nearly a year, they had planned and anticipated their return to Walindi Plantation on the island of New Britain for their wedding. The complications hadn't involved decorations or invitations, but rather plane tickets and tribal preparations. He couldn't imagine a more appropriate setting to begin his new life with her. Kimbe Bay and the distant volcanoes served as backdrop. A golden beach lined with vine-laden palm and hardwood trees formed an uncrowded aisle. A thatched-roof hut dripping with lush orchids shaded the dirt-floor where they would exchange vows.

Arriving in Papua New Guinea a few days before the wedding, they had spent many hours exploring the underwater realm that had first brought them to this island paradise. Among gnarly-faced crocodilefish, dens of blue ribbon eels, and harlequin ghost pipefish, they had once again been amazed at the beauty reflected below the surface. The anxiety of the impending wedding had melted in the gentle surges, but now, intermingled with excitement and happiness, the transient emotion returned. Less than an hour remained before the ceremony would begin.

Michele Westmorland



PNG Basics

Time Zone: Pacific Standard Time + 18 hours

Airports: Port Moresby Airport is five miles from the city.

Airport Fees: There is a departure tax of PGK\$15.

Entry Regulations: Visas, valid passports and return tickets are required.

Health Regulations: If you are traveling from an infected area, a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required. Typhoid and polio vaccinations are recommended. Cholera is a risk, but the vaccination is not required: consult your doctor. Malaria, hepatitis A and B are risks.

Currency and Exchange Rate: The currency is the Kina. US\$1 = PGK\$1.37.

Electricity: 240 volts AC, 50Hz

Language: The official language is English, though 700 other languages are spoken. Pidgin English is common, but some feel that it's insulting when a traveler attempts to speak it. **Communications:** The country code is 675 and the outgoing international code is 05. Fax and telegram services are available in cities.

Climate: The weather is generally humid and rainy year-round, but it can also get very cold in the higher elevations. December through March is usually the wettest time of the year, May through October tends to be drier.

Dress: Casual clothes are recommended, but bring rainwear. If you will be in the Highlands, bring warmer clothes.

Getting Around: Flying between provinces is convenient, since the connecting roads are often undeveloped due to the difficult terrain, but it is expensive. Buses and taxis are available in larger towns, and small boats can be hired in some regions.

Safety: Port Moresby has a dangerous reputation, and the government sometimes even declares a state of emergency in the city when the violent crime rate goes up. Some say this reputation is exaggerated and that Port Moresby is no more dangerous than any other large city; still, it's best to use caution.

Cuisine: Local cuisine consists mainly of taro, yams, pig, and fruits such as mangoes, passion fruit, bananas and pawpaws. International cuisine, especially Indian and Chinese food, is available in the hotels.

Tipping: Tipping is not customary.

Ghost Town: When the volcano Tuvuvur erupted in 1994, the once-bustling city of Rabaul became an eerily deserted place smothered in volcanic ash. During World War II, Japanese soldiers dug over 500 kilometers of tunnels into the hills around Rabaul and there are several wrecked Japanese fighter planes; ask around for a local to show you. The Rabaul harbor is also full of wrecks from different time periods, making it an interesting dive site.

Wildlife: If you choose which country to visit by the size of its insects, you should know about the Queen Alexandra Birdwing, the largest butterfly in the world, with a wingspan of 10 to 11 inches. There are over 700 species of birds, and Long Island is especially noted for its bird population.

Getting Married Over There: If you and your spouse-to-be are interested in tying the knot out of the country, you'll be happy to know that it's not too tough a task. As long as your marriage is legal in the country in which you wed, the U.S. will honor it, too. Place some inquiries with the tourism board of your country of choice. Find out what sort of paperwork you must fill out beforehand, how long a waiting period there is after filing a notice of intended marriage, and what government official has "power invested in him/her." Be prepared to provide all the certified documents you would in the States. Resorts specializing in honeymoon trips can also be a valuable resource for information, and most are willing to help organize. Most importantly, **bring the original marriage certificate home with you** and file it at your county records office.

She was surrounded by chattering women from the Bougainville tribe, who argued with each other over how to decorate the bride with body paint. When the bickering died down and a decision was made, one of the elder women took the furred round seed-pod from a tree she could not name and split it down the middle. She extracted the small seeds and crushed them in her hand, added a bit of coconut oil, and smeared the resulting orange paste across the left side of the bride's body. The shiny seed pulp coated her long blond hair, half her face, her arm, breast, belly, leg, foot. When painted from left temple to left toe in brilliant saffron, another woman coated her right side with deep charcoal, which blended onto her perspiring skin to create a chalky shadow that did not change with the sun. A sash weaved of palm fronds was placed across her chest, and a skirt crafted of broad green leaves stained pink on their undersides was wrapped around her slender waist. Bands of bright fuschia blooms were fastened to her arms, just above the elbows. Finally, an arched crest of curved bamboo shafts, downy-white gull feathers and brightly colored yellow, red and deep green plumage was set atop her head, adding nearly another foot to her height.

On the other side of the plantation, he was also prepared for the pending ceremony. Bare-chested, with an intense violet sarong wound snugly around his waist, his feet were bare and his mind was full. Long intertwined vines criss-crossed his chest, lounging from each shoulder down to the opposite hip and climbing diagonally up across his back. From a red, yellow and blue beaded necklace draped around his neck hung a white crescent formed of two wild boar's tusks, bound together with dried vines. His forehead, nose and cheeks were streaked with deep vermilion salve, and, like his bride soon to be, he wore a crest of feathers—yellow, white and black.

Kundu drumbeats pulsed throughout the plantation—the Siassi tribe was announcing the groom. Bougainville pan pipes, each over three feet long, sounded full and low across the ground, accompanying the bride to the wedding grounds. Excited children crowded around her, barely clothed in bright colors, their dark-framed eyes wide and anxious. He stood in the ceremonial hut with the Provincial Administrator, waiting. As she approached the hut, clad in palm fronds and hibiscus, two elder women swooped her up off the ground—the bride must be carried to her fiancé. They gently set her down, facing him, and each stared into the other's eyes as the Provincial Administrator announced their union—husband and wife. At his words, both tribes exploded with music and dancing. A Siassi man lofted the groom to his shoulders and paraded around in celebration. The festivities continued throughout the day, filling the passing moments with feasts of mumus, fresh fish and fruit, and vegetables cooked in banana leaves. Finally, the thrumming beat of the Kundu drums faded into silence as the sunlight passed below the horizon.

The newly wedded couple dealt with no triple-tiered cake, no waiting limousines, no tossing of the bouquet. Instead, they ran into their honeymoon immediately—capped with crowns of colorful feathers and marked with flower-based paint, they jump-started their new life in this island community. They didn't have to travel to paradise, they were already there. 🐦







Dive Travel

Photo by Howard Schatz/morph by John Newton

MERMAIDS

BY THEODORE GACHOT

We know very little for certain about mermaids. They slip through our fingers like a handful of minnows. It seems to be part of their ethos not to be easily understood, figured out, or explained away. They have as often seemed dangerous, lusty, and cruel as they have kind, vulnerable, and loyal. Like us, they are complex creatures, part human and part animal. Only in their case, it is more obvious.

We tend to think of mermaids as the fantasies of lonely sailors or as characters in children's books, and while those are aspects of their character and history, these creatures are also much older and much richer. Everything about mermaids is rooted in the strangeness of the natural world and rules that are not quite human. Archaeologists working with materials unearthed in the Middle East in the early part of this century were at first unable to identify a group of irregularly shaped 3,000-year-old pieces of bronze. It was only when a more detailed example was found that they realized that these crude bronze shards were actually highly stylized and heavily patinated statues representing women with fish tails.

Images of human beings with fish tails can be traced back to the earliest periods of history. Whether or not they have ever splashed their way around the earth, as symbols they have certainly existed. And unlike many symbols that have faded and lost their usefulness over time, mermaids have been surprisingly resilient.

.....

THE HISTORY of the mermaid's development as a symbol shows an unusual resilience. Over time its meaning has changed in response to the changing experience of humanity. This indicates that the mermaid is not simply a cultural or historical symbol, but also an organic one that has its basis in the human psyche. The idea of universal images common to all people can be traced back to Plato, who thought of them as the eternal Forms. Today, we think of them as archetypes: typical symbols for representing experience that are simply part of human nature. Mermaids represent tangible expressions of our feeling for the world around us, especially when that world is showing us something strange, new, or unknown. Their image is an amalgam of two parts, representing our connection between our inner feelings and our external experience of the objective world. The mermaid depicts that relationship in an image, the exact form and meaning of which changes constantly. . . .

.....

. . . IN ALCHEMY, the mermaid is a guide to the nature of the human mind, representing both what is human and what is animal and the necessity of reconciling the two into a coherent and lasting whole. The main difference between the alchemists and others is that the alchemists saw, believed in, and followed their mermaids. . . .

.....

MERMAIDS are symbols—and who knows, maybe actual beings—that have been with us throughout history, reminding us of our relationship to the objective world, the rhythms of nature, the sound of water crashing on a beach, the way light moves across the surface of a wide bay, and the corresponding ripples of feeling they create in us.

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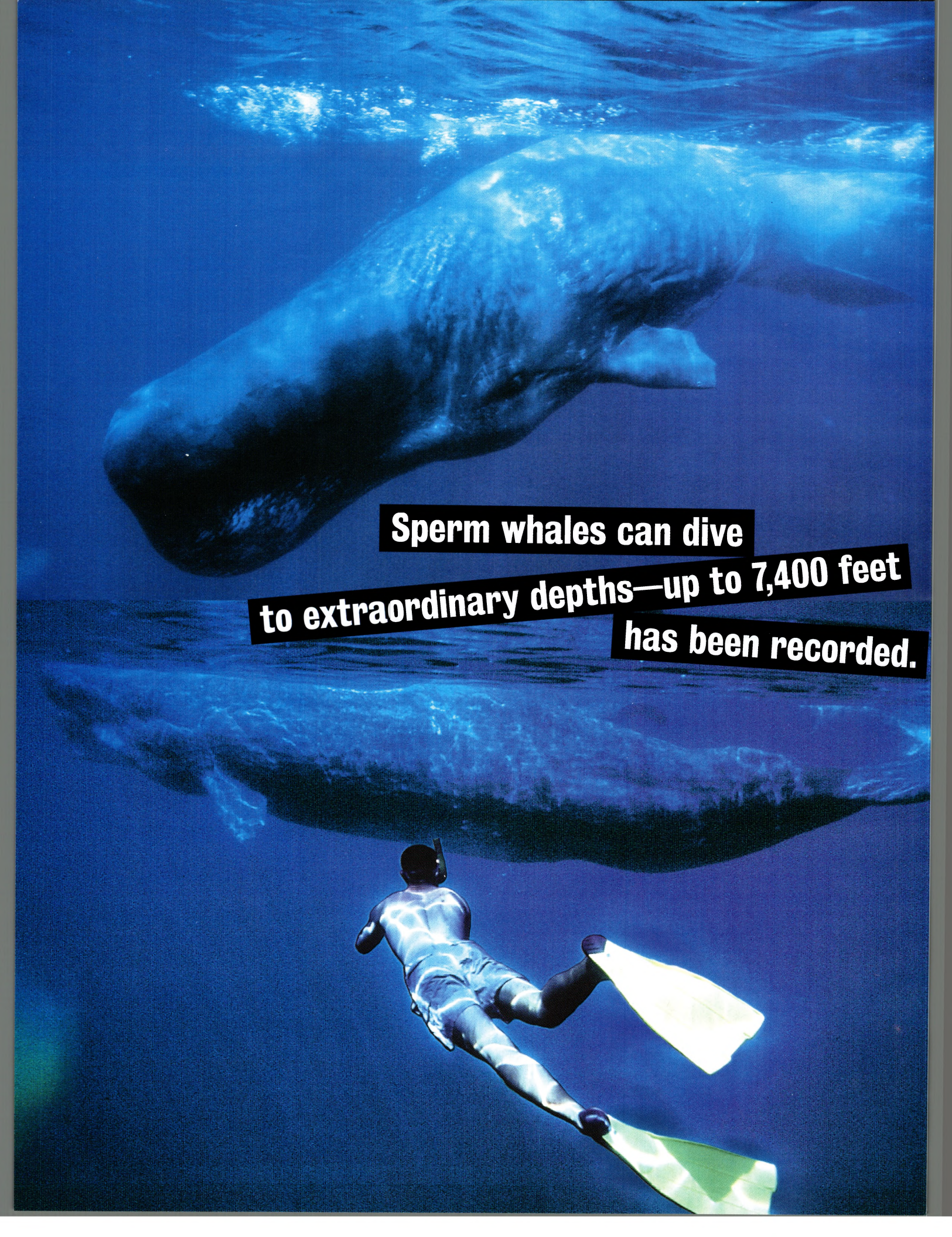
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A large sperm whale is swimming horizontally in the upper half of the frame, its massive head and dark body contrasting with the blue water. In the lower half, a scuba diver is seen from behind, wearing a mask and yellow fins, swimming towards the whale. The water is a deep blue, and the scene is illuminated from above, creating a sense of depth and scale.

**Sperm whales can dive
to extraordinary depths—up to 7,400 feet
has been recorded.**

At 40 tons, they are the largest of the toothed whales and probably the most widely recognized, yet still mysterious...

Sperm Whales

by Clara Weygandt

What we know about the sperm whale is typical of much of what we humans learn of nature, a crazy patchwork of half-truths and fact, stitched in place with tall tales and mystery. And in the case of sperm whales, we've had plenty of time to assemble that quilt.

Humans have a long history with sperm whales (*physeter macrocephalus*). Since 1712 they have been hunted in almost every ocean and by almost every sea-faring culture, from Norway and Japan to Ecuador and the United States. The town of Nantucket, Massachusetts, owes its very existence to this whale. And at one point, the American sperm whale fishery was the largest in the world. Whaling was dangerous and profitable, difficult and, at least from an artistic perspective, terribly romantic. There are countless paintings of men fighting 'the monster of the deep' and *Moby Dick*, one of the great American novels of the 19th century, centered around one man's obsession with a mighty, and notoriously evil-natured sperm whale.

Although in 1986 the International Whaling Commission issued a worldwide ban on whaling, and new research in the past 15 years has yielded a clearer picture of the behavior of this magnificent and complex animal, there is still plenty of confusion about sperm whales. With this in mind, let's clarify a few facts.

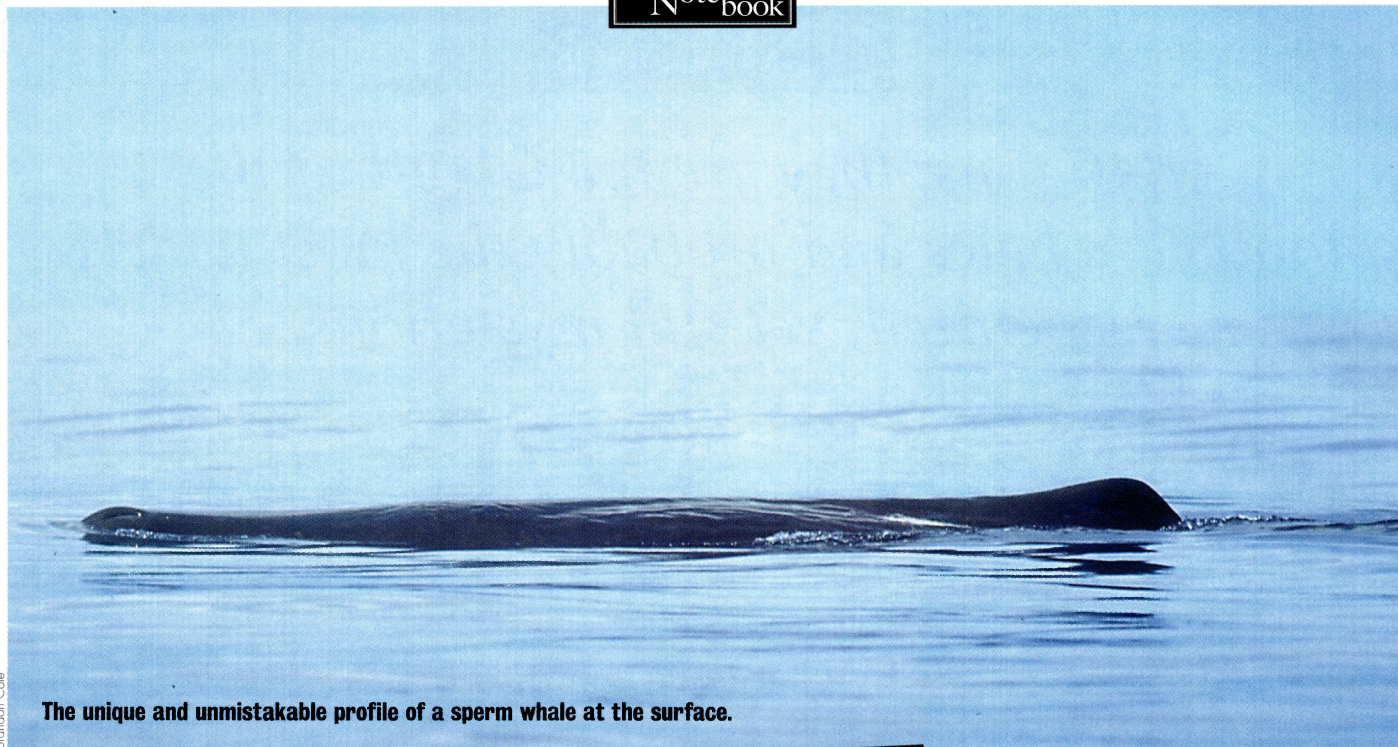
First, the English name for the leviathan, "sperm whale," is something of a misnomer. A shortened version of "spermaceti," the name refers to the liquid inside the spermaceti organ in the head of sperm whales, a liquid which sets into a white wax when cooled. Early whalers thought it resembled sperm. In French, the sperm whale is called *cachalot*, meaning large tooth. The Latin name literally translated means "whirlwind-bighead." The closest equivalent today to the Latin would be the Russian, *bolshoi plevum*, which translates to "great spouter." Sperm whales were hunted mainly for the spermaceti—the white waxy substance—first used as lamp oil and in smokeless candles, later in cosmetics and industry.

The spermaceti organ is unique. Sperm whales have a huge head, which takes up about a third of their bodies. While sperm whales possess one of the largest brains on the planet, a consider-

able portion of its head is filled by the barrel-shaped spermaceti organ. The organ is filled with the spermaceti oil, and transected by one of the whale's sinuses, while the other sinus runs along the side. To this date, no one knows the spermaceti organ's exact function. Current scientific hypothesis holds that it's used in echolocation, and perhaps in 'sonic attacks,' stunning the whale's prey before it is eaten. A less popular theory reasons that the spermaceti organ is used to facilitate diving, although research is proving the echolocation connection more likely. The bottom line? No one has seen a sperm whale feeding at the depths to which they are known to dive, and there is no definitive answer to the question.

The second fact? Ambergris. According to Randy D. Ralph, an ambergris aficionado who publishes an enormous web site related to that arcane substance, [<http://www.netstrider.com/documents/ambergris/>], the Chinese called this substance "dragon's spittle perfume," attributing it to dragons that drooled into the sea as they slept on rocky coasts. The word "ambergris" comes from the French, a description mostly of the color—a kind of amber-gray. Ambergris is often found floating in the water at sea, or washed up on beaches. Appearing solid, it melts when pierced with hot metal, and gives off a strong odor, described as musky, or like the wet leaves of a forest floor. It has been widely prized for centuries as a fixative in perfumes. It comes from sperm whales, and it's, well, it's poop. Sort of. The theory goes like this: Some sperm whales develop ambergris, but whether it comes from the whale, or from the squid the whale eats is not known. Ambergris formation may be a kind of internally generated Pepto-Bismol—the sperm whale's response to too many squid beaks irritating the lining of the whale's stomach. The ambergris, a thick, black oily substance, collects in the whale's hindgut, gathers up the offending beaks, and is then excreted by the whale. Floating at the surface, it solidifies and washes up on shore around the world.

Now that we've addressed two of the more frequently heard about and misunderstood pieces of the fact-work quilt of sperm whales, let's go, well, deeper. Let's talk about diving. For humans, the limit for sport diving is 130 feet. Plunging any deeper requires



The unique and unmistakable profile of a sperm whale at the surface.

skill, education, and of course, physical risk. The physiological consequences of going too deep, or coming up too fast are severe at best, deadly at worst. Sperm whales, however, dive to extraordinary depths with an ease that is truly mind-boggling.

Largest of all *odontocetes*, or toothed whales, the male sperm whale averages about 50 feet, and weighs in at 40 tons. The species has a strong sexual dimorphism, meaning the females are smaller than the males. Sperm whales have the reputation of being the deepest diving mammal, with depths of 2,250 m [7,400 feet] recorded. Dive duration for the males may be over an hour. Because of their greater body size, the males dive deeper and longer than the females. In addition, females often have a calf at the surface. Females tend to range more in the 1,000 m [3,280 feet] depths, for about 40 minutes, while the juveniles and calves only descend to a modest 700 m [2,300 feet] for shorter periods of time than the adults. These different size/dive-time limits allow the whales to fully exploit their prey base—squid—at different depths; the male, female and juvenile whales are not competing for the same food source in the same area. Big males eat where the young can't go, and the females feed in the region between, assuring the maximum possibility that everyone gets a meal.

Sperm whale physiology is adapted to deep diving. Not only are their bodies streamlined to reduce drag and decrease oxygen use, their lungs compress in the first minutes of a dive, driving the air into the windpipe and nasal passages, where oxygen exchange is limited. This means that the animal is using oxygen already stored in the blood and muscles during the dive, rather than oxygen in the lungs, thus greatly lowering the incidence of nitrogen in the blood.

**With streamlined bodies
to reduce drag and
decrease oxygen use, sperm whale
physiology is specially adapted
to deep diving.**

In addition, sperm whales have much higher concentrations of myoglobin, a protein that stores oxygen in muscle, than terrestrial mammals. Current scientific theory is that the oxygen needed for the whales'

tremendous dives comes from the blood or muscles, and is not exchanged via the lungs.

Besides being the deepest diving mammal, sperm whales have a complex social life, with some similarities to the social structure of elephants.

Yes, that's right, elephants. Completely alien environments, utterly different food sources, very comparable social styles. First noted in the 1970s by Peter Best of the University of Pretoria in South Africa, there was not enough reliable long-term data to really do more than take notice. Now sperm whale researchers Hal Whitehead and Linda Weilgart and elephant researcher Katharine Payne have pooled their knowledge, and in their article, "A Colossal Convergence" [*American Scientist*, May/June 1996] show that both animals have developed parallel behaviors that are integral to their continued survival and evolutionary success.

Basically what we now know about sperm whale behavior is this: male and female sperm whales live separate lives from the time when the males grow up and leave home. Some people might think this equals abandonment, but actually, the males leave the warmest water and the most abundant food source to the females and calves. Females hang out around the equator, mainly between 40°N and 40°S latitude. Clustering near oceanic upwellings where the currents provide good food sources, they stay in small familial groups of four to twelve individuals, which sometimes join other groups in the breeding season, eventually expanding into schools of 100 or more. These female social groups—called nursery schools by researchers—consist of several mature females, calves and immature whales of both sexes. Genetic testing has shown

that these groups share matrilineal lines. The groups are vital for breeding females. While the whales do dive and forage together, an adult always remains at the surface to protect the calves. In the afternoons, the animals socialize for hours at the surface after a morning of diving together for food; compared with many other animals, life is fairly stable and serene.

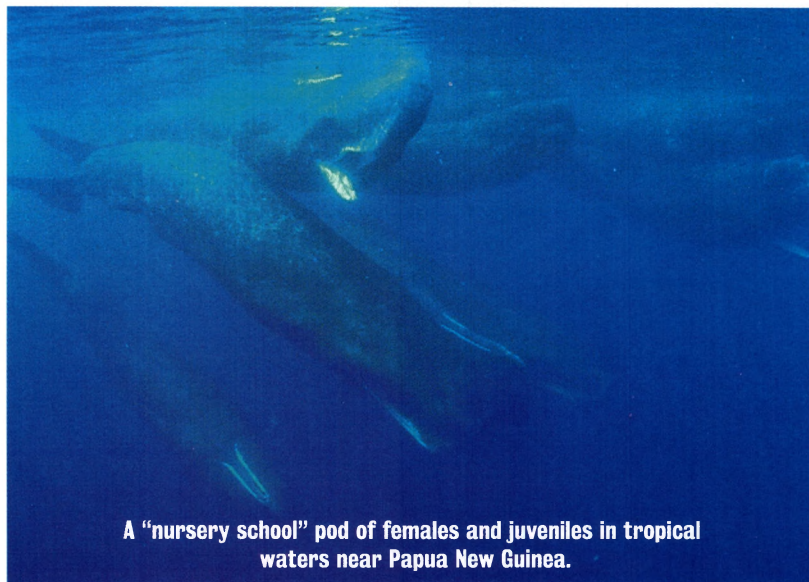
The males grow up in these groups, but once they reach about six years of age, they wander off toward the planet's poles in loose aggregations known as bachelor schools. Bachelor schools lack the tight-knit social structure of nursery schools, bearing more resemblance to roving bands of adolescents. They don't migrate to the breeding grounds where they might get hurt in a confrontation with a larger adult male, these younger males concentrate on eating and growing—and playing. One Japanese researcher snapped a photo of a young male sperm whale in the North Pacific, with an entire tree trunk in its jaws, being chased by the rest of the herd—a sort of giant marine puppy with an enormous stick. In another account, a ship in heavy seas off New Zealand reported a group of male sperm whales surfing down the front of huge swells. While the males in these schools are sexually mature in their teens, and capable of mating, according to Whitehead and Weilgart, they won't become prime breeders until they socially mature in their mid-twenties.

When they mature socially, male sperm whales take up a more solitary life, moving into the seas around the polar regions and swimming singly, or in pairs. Once a year they migrate back to the equator to mate with females in estrus. Usually there are one to four mature males per school, but it varies according to the original size of the school. Most of the time these older males avoid each other, but they do occasionally get into fights over the females. Many of the larger males have scars on their heads—the toothy result of scrapping with other sperm whales. Breeding season runs from January to July in the Northern Hemisphere, and August through December in the Southern, then it's back to solitary wandering for the males the rest of the year.

Many of these behavioral characteristics, including matrilineal groups, roving solitary males and young bachelor groups are similar to the elephants' behavior.

There are a number of other characteristics that contribute to the sperm whales' ecological success, including low mortality, longevity and low birth rate, strong inter-individual bonds, highly social groups, and group predator defense. [Weilgart et al, 1996] Sperm whales can live for more than 60 years, and usually have one calf every three or four years. The mother watches closely over the calf, and the stable social bonds of the nursery schools increase the juvenile's chances of survival. Lots of care and energy goes into making sure that every calf reaches adulthood. There are many accounts of the sperm whale's altruism towards a hurt or injured companion; often an entire group will support a wounded whale until it recovers or dies.

All these behaviors require sophisticated communication. Sperm whales communicate with what sounds to us like a series of clicks. These sounds have been correlated with various behaviors; diving, resting, lob-tailing and side-fluking. Sperm whales often dive in ranks—lining up, diving simultaneously, communicating while foraging, and surfacing together. Blind sperm whales have been captured with full stomachs, and in good physical condition, making it clear that echolocation and sound are vital to the whale's life. During the social hours that take place in the afternoons, the whales touch each other with their heads, or their flukes...and while we cannot translate, it is clear that communication is taking place.



A "nursery school" pod of females and juveniles in tropical waters near Papua New Guinea.

Suzanne Westwood

Sperm whales have few predators, the most notable ones being orcas and humans. The protectiveness a whale group demonstrates toward the young is integral to survival, especially when up against a pod of orcas. Most observations of orca attacks on sperm whales have involved a calf.

In October 1997, about 60 miles off the California coast, a group of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration researchers witnessed an attack by 25 orcas on a school of nine sperm whales. The sperm whales assumed the "marguerite" formation, in which the whales converge in a circle, heads in the center, and powerful tail flukes on the outside. While this strategy did not protect all the whales in the group, it was probably more effective than if the whales had remained out of formation. Other strategies sperm whales use to avoid predators include swimming away, sounding [diving], and defecation (clouding the water with feces).

Research continues on these incredible animals. As technology becomes more sophisticated, so does our ability to witness, record and analyze the whales' behavior. These large marine mammals have been immensely successful in their environment. But the very factors that have contributed to their success, also make them particularly vulnerable to human exploitation. Populations that mature slowly do not recover easily from the pressures of hunting. Even 10 years after the whaling ban, sperm whale populations are still declining because there are not enough males to ensure maximum pregnancy rates in the females. In addition, a number of countries still hunt whales. Besides hunting pressures, whales are vulnerable to the increased pollution in the oceans. In both 1988–89 and 1994, a total of 62 dead sperm whales were found. High levels of PCB's [polychlorinated biphenyls] are thought to be a factor in their deaths. In addition, gill netting, and collisions with shipping traffic take their toll on whales, as well as increasing noise pollution in the water, which could easily interfere with a sperm whale's echolocation and communication.

At this point in history, our knowledge of these altruistic and intelligent whales is evolving from seeing them as a resource to be exploited, to an animal to be appreciated and preserved—creatures living their remarkable lives in an way that we are just beginning to comprehend. 🐋

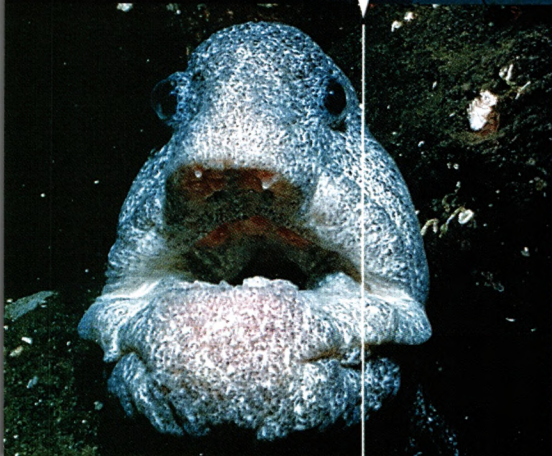
Many thanks to Hal Whitehead and Linda Weilgart and all the folks at their lab at Dalhousie University in Canada. Their research, generosity and writings helped make this article possible.

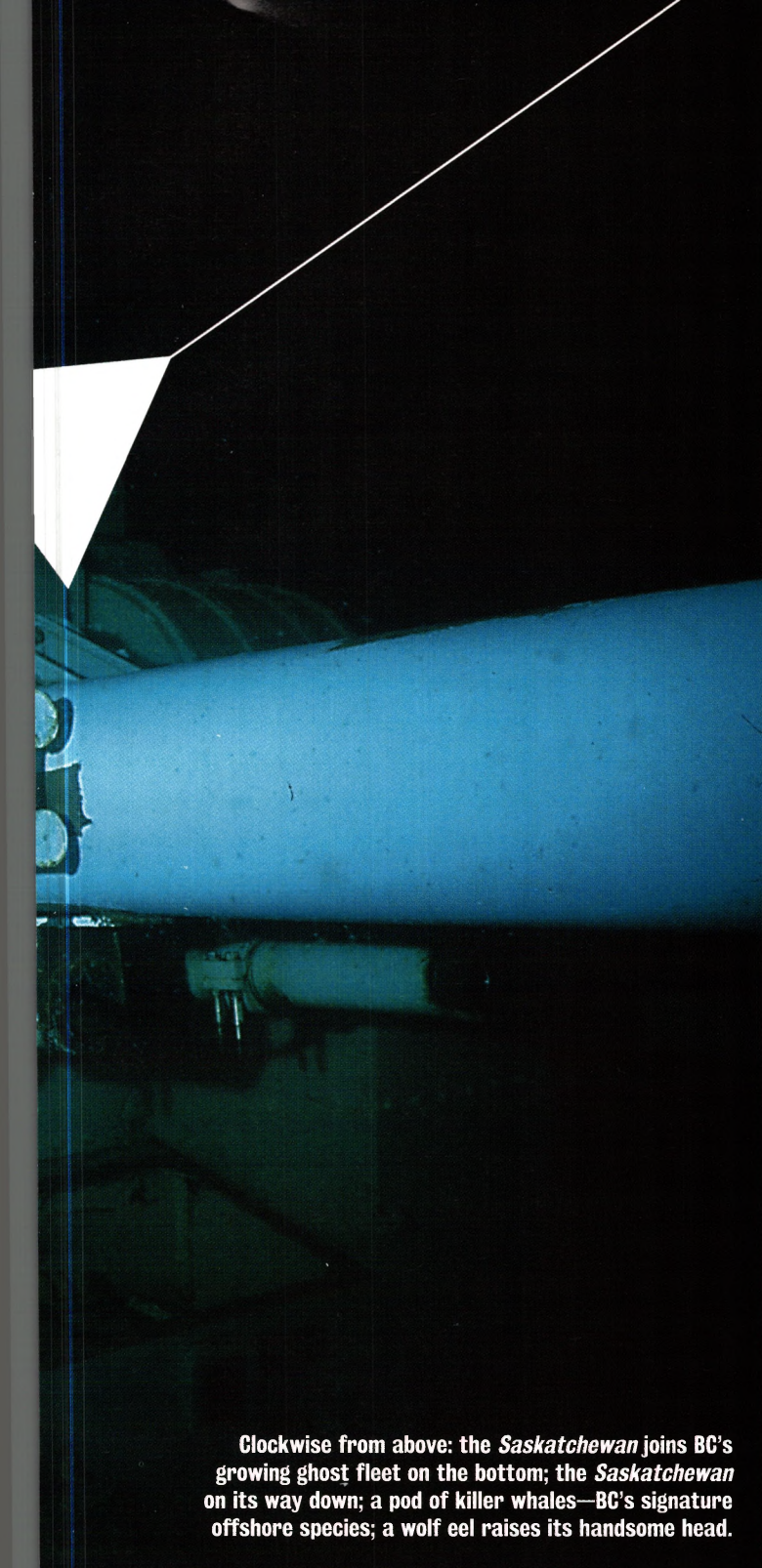
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WARNING
WRECK PENETRATION
SHOULD NOT BE
ATTEMPTED WITHOUT
PROPER TRAINING
AND EQUIPMENT





Where the hell is Nanaimo, and why would I want to dive there?

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY GRAEME TEAGUE

As the Toad from Great Hall once said in *Wind in the Willows*, “There’s nothing quite like messing around in boats!” And there’s nothing quite like gearing up and heading out each morning from a harbor city that is dedicated to messing around in boats. Under pale bright skies we slip by throngs of fishing and pleasure craft, masts and rigging cling-clanking. Beaver and Otter bush planes on seafoats are getting checked over as a super-ferry greets the morning with a blast from its foghorn. We motor past rolling woodlands back-dropped by snow-capped Mt. Benson to the west, then under the glacier-carved cliffs of Newcastle Island, thick with spruce, fir and hemlock. High in the trees, a bald eagle eyes our departure with stoic reserve. Harbor seals poke their heads up, glistening, escorting the dive boat out to another day on—and under—the waters off Nanaimo, Vancouver Island. The name of our vessel is the *Gulf Venturer* and it’s under these gulf island waters that we hope to find and photograph wonder and adventure!

Clockwise from above: the *Saskatchewan* joins BC's growing ghost fleet on the bottom; the *Saskatchewan* on its way down; a pod of killer whales—BC's signature offshore species; a wolf eel raises its handsome head.



Vancouver Island on Canada's western coast is part of a huge and jumbled series of islands, rivers and mountains stretching south from Alaska to Washington state. Deep glacier-carved fjords, combined with plate tectonics, make for spectacular topside scenery and deep wall diving close to shore.

Some 270 miles long and up to 65 miles wide make Vancouver a big island with lots of coastline to explore and dive. Well over a thousand ships have wrecked along the west coast alone. Highest altitude along the island chain is just over 6,000 feet, with nearby Mt. Washington serving up great skiing in the winter, hiking and camping in the summer. Situated in a long and beautiful natural harbor on the island's east coast, Nanaimo boasts Canada's mildest and sunniest climate. Serviced by ferry systems from six major centers in the United States and Canadian mainland, plus air and rail links, Nanaimo is a great starting point for any island diving adventure.



But despite Nanaimo's mild and sunny reputation, there is still the business of getting wet. Although I trained to dive right here on Vancouver Island, I've been getting fat and lazy in the tropics for years—with the accompanying fat and lazy dive habits. Dry suits, layers of long underwear, thick gloves, hood and 30 pounds of lead are an abrupt reminder, a rude awakening. Feeling fairly inept, I'm the bumbling, fumbling, stumbling marshmallow man. Loose on the back deck, I do my best not to wipe out all the other divers. "You do this for a living?" one inquires with studied innocence and thinly veiled mirth. Dripping with heat, I gladly flail into the cold water, retrieve my camera and drop below.

Passing through the plankton bloom the undersea-scape opens into cold, clear waters. I always like that about diving British Columbia, sort of like a stage curtain opening to reveal the first act. Make the effort to push through the crowd to the front and you will be rewarded. We are anchored on the west side of Snake Island to dive the wall. A resident group of harbor seals observes our progress as we descend. Emerald green becomes black as dive lights pierce the dark. Then the show begins. Jumbled rock formations covered with pure white, giant plumose anemones,

some almost two feet high. Pausing to look under a rock ledge, the ceiling is entirely white anemones; my strobe blasts off the white like a mirror, leaving spots dancing across my eyes. Within 30 minutes I'm cooled off, out of film and exhilarated.

Being a natural and very protected harbor made what later came to be called



"Nanaimo" an obvious choice for habitation by humans. The area's rock petroglyphs indicate human presence starting at the last ice age some 10,000 years ago. The harbor coast became home to a thriving five-village Coast Salish Indian community. Calling themselves *Sneneymexuxw*—meaning great and mighty

The Saskatchewan Goes Down for the Count

On Saturday, 14 June 1997, with a puff of smoke and a sharp bang, the Canadian navy destroyer *HMCS Saskatchewan*, slipped below the waters off Snake Island just outside Nanaimo.

The ship was sunk as part of British Columbia's artificial reef program. The 366-foot *Saskatchewan* is the fifth warship to be sunk over the past two years in BC's waters, all in an effort to build and promote diving in the region.

Completely stripped and sanitized, the preparation prior to sinking set new standards for responsible artificial reef programs and was sanctioned by the Cousteau Society. Demolition teams set charges and did a final inspection. Under glorious sunny skies an enormous flotilla of watercraft witnessed the big show. Everything that could float nosed into the action: canoes, kayaks, fishing boats, jet skis, floatplanes, even a red Chinese junk. The BC Ferry Corporation donated the use of a huge ferry and the crew donated their time to take on upwards of 1,500 people who paid for the view, while the Artificial Reef Society received the funds. About 30,000 well-wishers in some 3,000–5,000 watercraft crowded around. Gawkers jammed in the rigging and newscopters buzzed overhead, local planes made one last fly-by.

Then at 10:20am, a parachute flare went up, answered by a blast from the ferry's horn. A puff of smoke shot out the port side followed by a sharp bang. Almost immediately the ship began to sink, aided by the flooding of her engine rooms the night before. Within four-and-a-half minutes, the *HCMS Saskatchewan* belched a final whoosh of air and was gone. She rested at 105 feet at the bow and she sat upright with a slight portside list. Dive buoys were attached, and by Sunday morning diving had begun.

people—Nanaimo is an English attempt at the native name.

In the 1850s the Hudson Bay Company discovered coal in the region and imported English and Scottish miners to work the deposits. Sandstone quarries, shipyards and a herring saltery were further added, and visitors today can still observe the ruins. But it was the lumber industry that emerged as the economic backbone of the region—and it is still a huge employer. Fishing, both sport and commercial, adds to the economy, as do the more than 20 companies involved in aquaculture.

Today a burgeoning population of urban refugees from large cities are high-teching in town and building homes on the coastal hills, adding a further mix to the city's culture and commerce. But more important to scuba fans, a solid, experienced and dedicated diving community is well established in Nanaimo, ready to host traveling divers.

After Snake Island, the next stop was a dive at Five Finger Island, and then out to Olebar Point, off nearby Entrance Island with its classic lighthouse, cluster of red and white buildings, and resident seals.

With each plunge my comfort and ease returned, allowing me to concentrate on the spectacular photo opportunities. Large tides mean big currents laden with nutrients—and these cold, rich waters build 'em big. When it comes to critters, this is the Texas of diving. Everything is bigger than anywhere else. A giant octopus, the largest ever recorded, had a radial spread of over 60 feet! While the giant anemones, giant sea stars, giant boot sponges, king crabs and giant hooded nudibranchs aren't quite 60 feet, they're still substantially outsized compared to their warm-water relatives. Tube worms get so big they could eat their Cayman Christmas cousins for breakfast. You get the idea, big and colorful. They range from dazzling oranges and vermilion reds to transparent turquoise, with all the pastel shades of peach, pink and strawberry in between.

Finally, I'm comfortable enough to risk it and boldly call for the 'sea anchor.' Grunting, Captain Bob hands down my old, thick aluminum housing/rig, convinced it will literally be my personal ticket straight to the bottom. Not to worry—it's just macro time! And this is land of nudibranchs. On a single dive and in just five minutes, I swam over a sand patch and counted 25 giant Spanish Dancer nudibranchs. In case you don't understand giant, these guys ranged from eight to twelve inches long and four to eight inches high. Big. On another dive I had three forearm-sized orange peel nudibranchs motoring around on the rocks like WWI army tanks. However, the



Giant everything is characteristic of the clear, cold waters around Vancouver Island—giant metridium anemone share a rock with a sunflower star that working on it.

*Large tides mean
big currents laden with
nutrients—
and these cold,
rich waters build 'em big.*

crowd favorites are always the delicate alabaster nudibranchs, especially in their translucent orange stage.

At times the brooding anemones cover the entire bottom like a very-berry shag rug. A great find, my buddy hooks up with a juvenile Puget Sound king crab, all squeaky clean in its Keith Moon orange suit complete with orange top hat. Rockfish and lingcod greet us on every dive, as do the scores of huge red and purple sea urchins. Perhaps right there with frogfish in the ugly-is-beautiful category are the gentle and preposterously ugly wolf eels. Pairing up for life, these eels' faces give away their secret cravings. Their favorite food is the roe found inside the giant urchins, and years of hunting and crunching show in the numerous scars around their heads. I never fail to laugh and enjoy their company whenever we meet.

Our final day approaches with excitement for the guests, apprehension for me; we have one final dive. Tomorrow we're to be part of the first wave of divers to dive and explore the 366-foot *HMCS Saskatchewan*, sunk amongst great fanfare the day before east of Snake Island. It's a one-shot, one-roll-of-film deal to bring back the goods. Covering my end fully, I've got a fresh strobe, fresh film, correct settings, all gear accounted for, back-up film and tools in place.

The morning brings clouds and a chilly wind. It's going to be dark—especially at a hundred feet. Divers stir things up even on a

fresh wreck, and the contrast of black water and pale blue-gray paint will be striking. Descending as a group with Mike and Geena, I'm happy for the company, as the line is our only reference. Suddenly the ship is below, too late, bang, thud we're at 80 feet on the foredeck. Getting organized, we begin with two giant metal tube sponges threatening from the dark; the forward gun keeps me for a third of a roll. Then we're onto the bridge area where the ship's official commemorative plaque is posted. Holly pops up and clowns with the bridge phone—even underwater people react to the camera. The funnel sports a huge mural of divers descending onto a wreck, the Artificial Reef Society's logo. Drifting farther aft into the black and gloom of the rear—her stern sits at 125 feet—we approach the rear guns. All over the wreck yellow warning signs advise divers to be cautious and well-trained before penetrating wrecks. Sturdy advice. Out of film I wind my way toward an ascent line. It's been a strange experience, a wreck just hours old, cleaned, gutted and environmentally scrubbed, large square holes all along her hull, just sitting there in the dark.

I look forward to a return visit in a few years when the currents and nutrient-laden waters have worked their magic. As an underwater photographer, there's nothing like the captive subject of a shipwreck to present you with endless opportunities.

On the ferry ride back to Vancouver we

had two hours to reminisce over the past few days. Nanaimo's physical setting is simply stunning, especially after my present home, flat Florida. That great mix of character and setting give the harbor, and therefore the city, life and soul. There is an almost decadent abundance of wildlife, from bald eagles to nudibranchs. Fabulous food and wonderfully friendly locals, who probably find yanks infinite subject matter for mirth, round out the invitation.

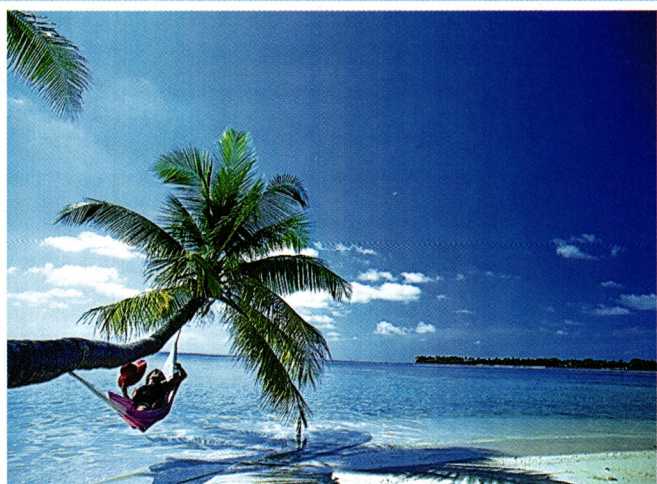
And Nanaimo is definitely pro divers, with full service and everything from single dives to live-aboards. The Nanaimo Dive Association is a thriving contributor to the community. Hotels and restaurants offer deals and coupons to divers, plus the area is serviced by a dedicated dive travel agency.

With all that taken into consideration, I had not expected the unexpected—the great group of divers who made me feel part of the gang as we discovered and dived together. Their sense of humor and fun reminded me of how special and lucky we are as divers. After traveling thousands of miles, we meet strangers who, through shared experience and laughter, bring tears to our eyes when we have to say goodbye just days later.

The experience, ambiance and charm of diving Vancouver Island's harbor city, Nanaimo, will be calling me back for years to come. 🐬

For all the details to plan your trip, see the British Columbia Dive Travel Planner, page 133

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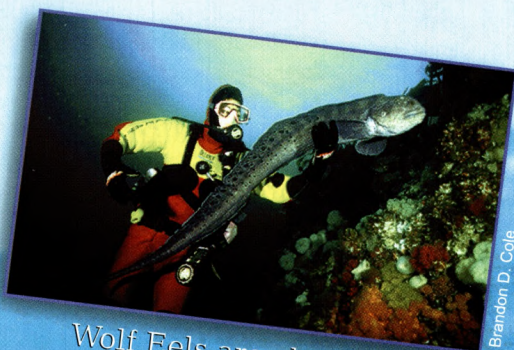
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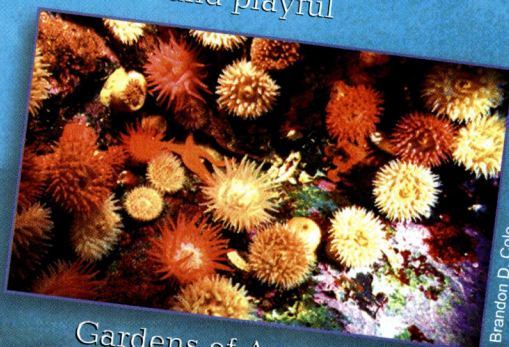
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Wolf Eels are abundant
and playful



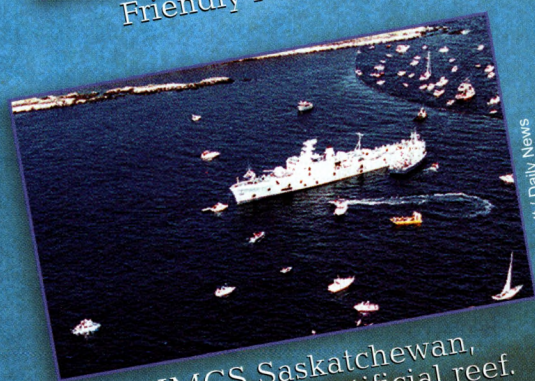
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THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Reminiscing the Philippines' Puerto Galera and Rediscovering Its Treasures Today

STORY BY
HENEAGE MITCHELL

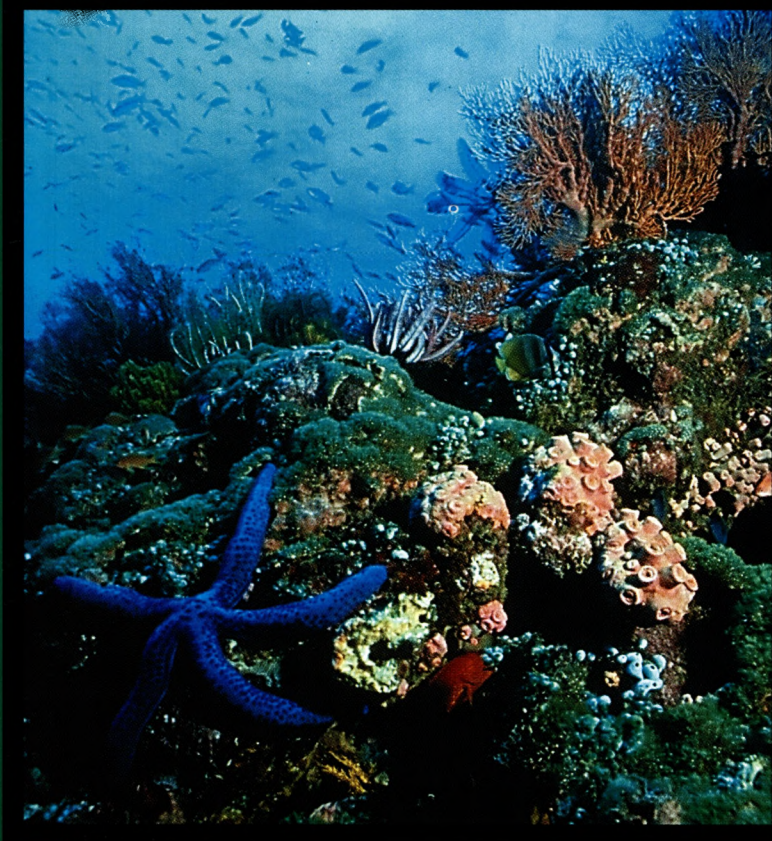
PHOTOS BY
GUNTHER DEICHMANN

Back in the 1970s, I was one of those restless souls who by military command, ill luck or good fortune arrived in the Philippines during the hey-day of the Marcos era.

Back then, living in the Philippines had a few minor drawbacks, such as endemic corruption, a major insurgency problem and an inadequate, crumbling infrastructure—not really a fantastic blueprint for success. Thank God, things have changed radically since then, although it still doesn't hurt to carry a few hundred peso notes next to your driving license if you're planning to run the occasional red light in Manila.

However, living in the Philippines had then and still has now about 7,107 tremendous advantages. I'm talking about the extraordinary variety of natural life found on the 7,107 islands that make up the archipelago and the astounding diversity of stunning marine life that thrives beneath it.

A sea star enjoys some of the beautiful underwater landscape Puerto Galera has to offer (below); Tamaraw Falls—a mighty example of the unbelievable beauty to be found on the interior of Mindoro (opposite).



As a young oil-field worker, I traveled all over Southeast Asia for eight months of each year and dove throughout the region. But it was to the Philippines that I returned every leave, because the diving was so superior.

Back then, traveling to remote parts of the country could be quite a challenge—most

visitors roamed no further than the air-conditioned bus routes and the few paved roads would take them.

But the 1970s were also the decade of the backpacker, and from time to time these stalwarts could be observed wandering the dusty streets of the Philippines. Earnest-looking individuals, usually traveling in pairs, and wearing faded mementos of previous cultural collisions, these latter-day Lewis and Clarkes with their tattered copies of *The Lonely Planet* were busy filling in the blanks for the tourist maps of the '80s.

Philippine resorts such as Boracay, Moalboal and Bohol are well known to divers and beach lovers from around the world today. They were all 'discovered' by the humble backpackers of the '70s. And each time the world noticed the latest idyllic discovery and started to pour in the cement and sanitation civilization requires to market the precious tropical jewels they

had unearthed—thereby destroying the very essence of the treasure—the backpackers silently retreated, quietly continuing the search for their own personal Shangri-La's.

Then they stumbled on the town of Puerto Galera, a tiny port on an isthmus on the north coast of Oriental Mindoro, sitting in what must be one of the most beautiful natural harbors in the world. Then they knew. This was it. Home.

Obviously, backpackers were not the first to find Puerto Galera. Mariners have known of it for centuries. It's Spanish name, "Port of Galleons," by the Spanish, referenced the excellent protection the harbor affords from typhoons and tropical storms that occasionally affect the region from June to

December. The Spanish

also found gold throughout the island's mountains and deemed the seagirt spot of land, "Mindoro"—Mine of Gold. Sitting at Puerto's bustling pier, it is not hard to imagine what it must have been like centuries ago, when the galleons sailed in. It certainly can't have been easy to direct the big, clumsy vessels through either of





No more galleons—now Puerto Galera is home to dive boats and outriggers (top); while coconut palms sway on land, divers get ready to explore underwater (above).

Puerto's navigable channels, but once they were inside, they were as safe as they could be.

But Puerto Galera somehow was lost for a few centuries, until a fortuitous ferryboat ride brought it to the attention of the traveling cognoscenti. Suddenly, an undercurrent of hyperbole, a palpable wave of excitement washed over the fringes of the traveling elite in Southeast Asia.

Stories of improbable beaches, secluded coves, genuinely friendly local people, stunning corals and glorious tropical scenery lured many jaded "experts" to brave the five-hour bus and ferry journey from Manila to find out the truth for themselves. They returned with their own tales of wonder and awe. Some then mysteriously disappeared, resurfacing as characters in tales of investments and developments in a booming Puerto Galera months later.

The word was definitely spreading.

Soon, Puerto Galera was the place to get away from it all. I remember visiting it in the early '80s for the first time and being completely blown away by the sheer natural beauty of the place. Simplicity and isolation reigned. Native-style cottages and the lack of electricity and phones indicated the port's inexperience with civilization.

But you could step off almost any beach and be snorkeling in clear waters over gorgeous corals in moments. You could head off in a small, motorized outrigger *banca* boat and find your own private beach with nobody around. You could hike up into the mountains to explore one of several waterfalls. You might even meet some of the indigenous Mangyan tribe, who can sometimes be persuaded to part with one of their intricately woven native baskets—for the right price.

Diving then was limited by the lack of equipment and compressors, but if you knew the right people, you could probably work in a dive. I remember being taken to Escarceo Point to dive the Shark Caves, one of Puerto's most famous sites, and enjoying the exquisite sensation of flying in a stiff current over some of the most dazzling coral reefs I had ever seen.

The dive began at a natural opening in the reef, called Hole in the Wall, for obvious reasons. Passing over a series of coral-encrusted canyons, I dipped over the reef's edge to be collected by the water's push, which whipped along the wall. Following the dive guide, I steered down into a sandy depression. Here, sheltered for a while from the current, I was able to peer into a small cave at around 100 feet—where no fewer than five whitetip sharks were resting—before lifting off into the watery breeze to be washed out past a stunning wall overhung with pink cauliflower corals at 40 feet.

Later that day, I drifted around the perfect corals and white sands of one of the shallow coral gardens in the Batangas Channel. Nighttime I lounged on the beach with a beer in my hand, listening to the surf gently kissing the sand, staring up at a sky so full of stars it was serenely unreal.

Obviously, this was not going to remain a secret for very long.

In 1982, Australian diver Brian Homan noticed several round depressions in the muddy bottom of the Manila Channel while finishing off a tank of air. Clearing away the detritus, it didn't take him long to realize that he had stumbled onto something truly awesome. He had found the remains of an ancient inter-island trading boat that had sunk—with its full load of Chinese dragon jars and Ming pottery intact—centuries before. Working with a team from the National Museum of the Philippines, Homan recovered the treasure, investing his share in the first dive center on Sabang Beach.

From these fortuitous beginnings, Puerto Galera has become one of the leading diving destinations in the Philippines. Local operators boast of having over 25 dive sites within 20 minutes of their dive stores. There are over a dozen professionally run dive centers in the area, two PADI Five Star Centers and one PADI Course Director.

Puerto Galera is all about diving. True, other activities, such as mountain biking, hiking, kayaking, small boat sailing and fishing are popular and do-able, and there is even a nine-hole golf course now. But it is the diving that has established Puerto Galera as the destination of choice for thousands of sophisticated repeat customers from around the globe.

A renowned training center, Puerto Galera hosts several PADI Instructor Development Courses annually. Literally thousands of Open Water courses are conducted locally every year. IANTD and Nitrox diving have caught on in a big way in Puerto Galera, and there are several outfits offering technical equipment rentals, refills and courses. Some of the deeper local dive sites, especially off Escarceo Point, are natural candidates for technical diving, allowing a more leisurely and therefore, the pundits say, safer exploration of the reef.

Often shadowed by nearby Tubbataha Reef, the diving at Puerto Galera holds its own among top world dive sites. However, strong currents tend to restrict Puerto Galera sites to experienced divers only. At least one local diver has been washed out to sea to be recovered eventually in the middle of the Verde Island Passage.

Characterized by prolific corals and marine life, diving is year-round, though the best conditions are during the dry season from January to August; visibility, which rarely exceeds 60 feet, varies seasonally. During the rainy season from September through December, the prevailing currents and winds are from the northwest, water temperatures can drop to around 72° and visibility decreases overall due to wash-off from the rain.

Topside, the sun is intense regardless of the season.

Within the immediate vicinity of Puerto Galera, there is a wide variety of hard and soft corals.

The entire area is a marine sanctuary and the fish are not especially wary of divers. Spear fishing is seriously discouraged by all the dive shops in the area, and there is a strong, professional cohesion between the dive operators, who seem to be able to speak in every language that has ever been spoken—and then some.

Some of the other more interesting dives you will find adjacent to Puerto Galera include Verde Island Wall, a 30-minute boat ride away from most dive centers. A stunning drop-off starting at around 15 feet on the southeast tip of the island, this dive is often described as one of the best wall dives in the Philippines. I agree. Festooned with giant gorgonians and dripping with soft corals and swathes of star coral, the wall is visited by pelagics of all shapes and sizes feeding in the often-strong currents. Jacks, tuna, blacktip and whitetip sharks, mantas, eagle rays and Napoleon wrasse are not uncommon. Darting in and out of the clefts in the wall, surgeonfish, butterfly tangs, sweetlips, batfish and myriad reef fish perform an endless ballet of swirling color. This is a dive not to be missed—most operators make a day of it, often picnicking on a beach between dives. Second dive options at Verde Island include the Washing Machine, a shallow roller-coaster of a drift dive along the west shore over canyons and sandy rills. Not for the faint-hearted.

The more romantic may enjoy the *Baugon* Wreck. Legend has it that a galleon, laden with the silks and spices of the east, left Manila in fine weather bound for Spain a few hundred years back. Somehow, despite the perfect weather conditions, she ended up on the rocks a few feet off the beach on Verde Island a scant few hours later. The first thing the passengers and crew did upon reaching safety was to construct a gallows and hang the unfortunate

navigator who had so effectively ruined their day. Although her keel was raised some years back for preservation by the National Museum, a rummage around in the shallow gravel and sand can often turn up a musket ball or two.



A pink sponge amidst a bed of soft corals is a main attraction for colorful anthias.

Another of my favorite dive sites, and one which is less frequently visited, is the reef at Talipanan Beach several miles to the west of Puerto Galera Town proper. Easily accessible from any dive center by banca boat, this reef is also popular with passing live-aboard boats making so-called “transition runs” to and from Tubbataha Reef in the Sulu Sea to the south.

Likely to be awash with unpredictable currents, Talipanan Reef has some outstanding coral growth competing for space in the fast flowing, nutrient-rich waters. Pelagics cruise past frequently, and the reef is alive with fish of all shapes and sizes. I remember diving here with local PADI Course Director Allan Nash of Asia Divers some years back. After 40 minutes of swirling currents, sharks, barracuda, a wahoo and other pelagics too numerous to mention, a huge dog-tooth tuna shot right between my dive buddy and me as we were making a safety decompression stop. We both rose to the surface with the same wide-eyed look of stupefaction stamped across our face, the “no-one-is-going-to-believe-us-when-we-tell-them-what-we-just-saw” look. It was a dive version of the classic fishing tale of the one that got away.

Puerto Galera is a complete dive destination in its own right. It is also a great jumping-off point for other, more remote destinations.

continued on page 118

Puerto Galera seen from the air—almost as impressive as the view underwater.



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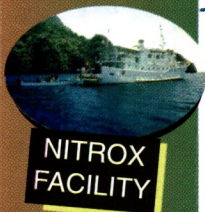


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Puerto Galera, continued from page 115

Several live-aboard boats and yachts catering to divers call Puerto Galera home, and Frank Doyle of Laguna Beach Club operates *Rags*, a seaworthy, comfortable—though hardly photogenic—air-conditioned, 70-foot *banca* boat, which takes groups of up to six divers to sites as far afield as Apo Reef, Coron Bay, Maestre de Campo, the Tablas Straits, Romblon and Boracay.

Sabang Beach was the first beach on the island to become significantly developed. The largest and easternmost of three adjacent coves, Sabang was a logical place to start development, if only because what passes for a road ends in the center of town. At the end of the tarmac, tired, dusty jeepneys wheeze and clank to a sagging halt, gratefully discharge their colorful loads of residents and visitors, and wait for the return trip to Puerto Galera pier in the town proper, a few miles to the west.

***Sabang has its own charm,
and it certainly is the liveliest beach
after dark with the most options
for dining and dancing.***

A short walk brings you to the beach. Once, it was possible to see the beach from the jeepney stop. Now, the cluster of cottages, inns, discos, bars, restaurants, sidewalk stores and barbecue stands somewhat mars the view.

Almost two decades of attrition has had a noticeable effect on the quality of the water and the reef off Sabang Beach. Virtually no planning has gone into the infrastructure, and the result is a hodgepodge of resorts, cottages and small inns competing for space with the eight or so dive centers operating along the beach. The humble homes of the local folk are squeezed between this crazy quilt of wood, bamboo, cement and sand.

But even so, Sabang has its own charm, and it certainly is the liveliest beach after dark with the most options for dining and dancing. It still retains a youthful vigor and a throbbing pulse that reverberates into the wee hours—its popularity endures, especially with the younger set.

Adjacent Small Laguna, the next cove to the west, is ironically larger than Big Laguna, even farther west. Both enjoy a laid-back tranquility that appeals to families and those seeking a bit of solitude. There are several excellent

resorts and dive centers on each of them, and they both have quite good snorkeling off the beach.

Still following the sunset, towards Puerto Galera town proper, there is a large resort, popular with Scandinavians, called Coco Beach. In common with most of the larger developments in the area, it also has its own dive center.

All over the surrounding area, there are secluded beaches with small, private resorts, several with their own dive centers, and some awesome beach houses belonging to Manila's elite, many with commanding views of the stunning scenery.

Puerto Galera's harbor is now home to the Puerto Galera Yacht Club and pleasure crafts, ranging from homely scows to palatial gin palaces. They rock gently on their moorings, testaments to a lifestyle most of us can enjoy only vicariously as we pass by in a spray of salt water kicked up by our speeding *banca* boats.

In Puerto Galera in the early 1980s, the backpackers realized that the rest of the world was once again closing in on them. They headed a few miles east, where, among the sand dunes of White

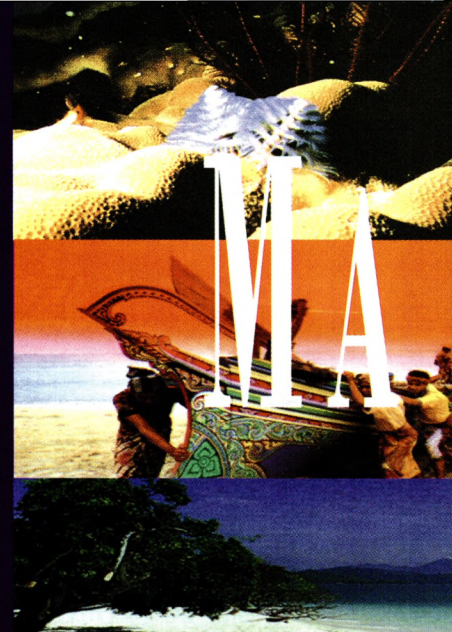
Beach and Talipanan Beach, their spiritual descendants have managed to maintain a reasonably effective defense of the simple life they found all those years ago.

But despite all the changes that the area has passed through, all the investment, the development, the marketing and the hype, it's not really so different now.

Oh, okay, so the electricity is now on more often than it's off, there's a deli on main street Sabang, good food and fine wines are available today at many establishments. Cellular phones work well in most places, resorts have e-mail, and you can fly down from Manila by helicopter or seaplane if you want to. But the essence of the place remains unchanged. The beaches are still improbably beautiful, the coves as secluded as before. The local people are still genuinely friendly. The corals and marine life are stunning and prolific still and the tropical scenery is as glorious as ever it was.

The surf continues to kiss the sand and the stars are as plentiful as they were when I first looked at them from Puerto's beaches so long ago. These days though, the beer is much, much colder. 🐟

**For all the details to plan your trip, see the
Puerto Galera Dive Travel Planner, page 134**



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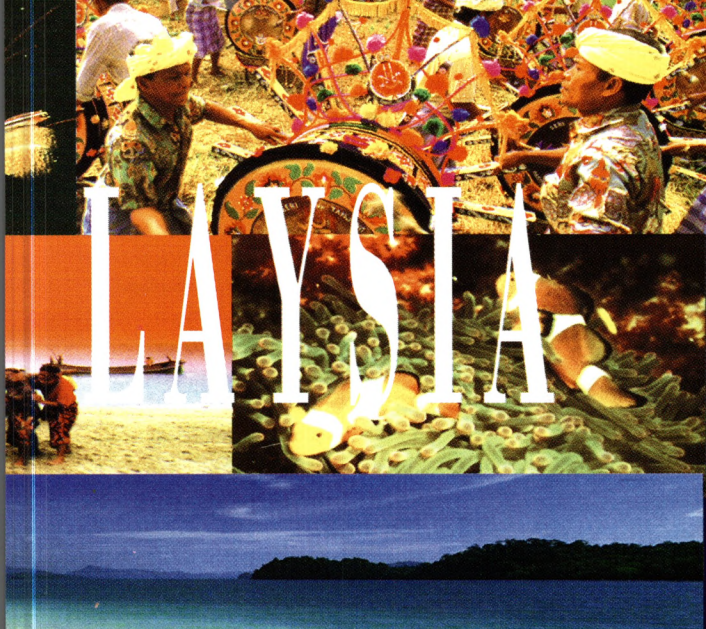
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Bomba's, continued from page 74

jeep-style tour buses frequent the more popular sites, such as the Baths, the Copper Mine ruins on the island's south-eastern point and Spanish Town—Virgin Gorda's main burg. If you prefer to wander solo, take a drive to the island's highest point, Gorda Peak National Park, a windswept landscape dominated by century plants, willow cacti and stunning views of both the Atlantic and Caribbean.

Jost Van Dyke, home to Foxy's, a beach bar rumored to host the world's best New Year's parties, is also worth exploring. As are Anegada, Norman Island, Peter Island, Cooper Island. . . Underwater and topside, the BVI offers varied terrain, eclectic experiences, and curious stories.

Simple Pleasures

Beneath the full moon, Al Gauchi, a Canadian turned BVI divemaster, loops his index finger through a clear glass ring that dangles perpetually from his neck—on the dive boat, and even underwater, which turns out to be where he first encountered his prized jewel.

Underwater and topside, the BVI offers varied terrain, eclectic experiences, and curious stories.

"I found this on the *Rhone*," Gauchi confides. "It's the first bottle I ever found in the BVI. I brought it up, knocked it against something on the boat, and the rim came off, just like that. I made it into a necklace, and I haven't taken it off since."

In its new context, the bottle rim is oblique and strangely beautiful. It's Al's first year in the BVI, but he admits that he's in danger of joining the tight-knit group of expatriates who came here on a whim and never left. Like the strange glass ring, the BVI is subtly moving and difficult to let go of. There's no one reason why people tend to linger. It's everything. The people, the vistas, the islands, the diving...the simple pleasures. It's dangerously easy to fall under the BVI's spell, to succumb to the heightened quality of experience that permeates things. It's easy to believe that, in the British Virgin Islands, people do "see more and feel better"—with or without Bomba's punch. 🐟

For all the details to plan your trip, see the BVI Dive Travel Planner, page 132

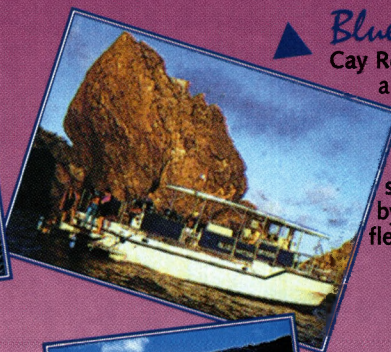
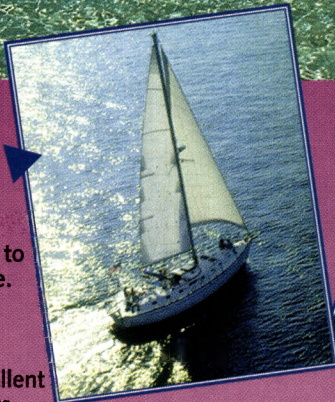
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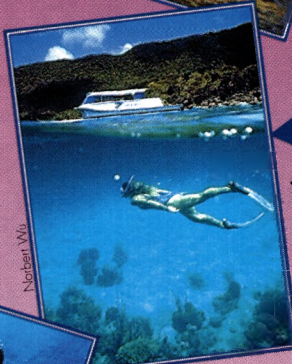
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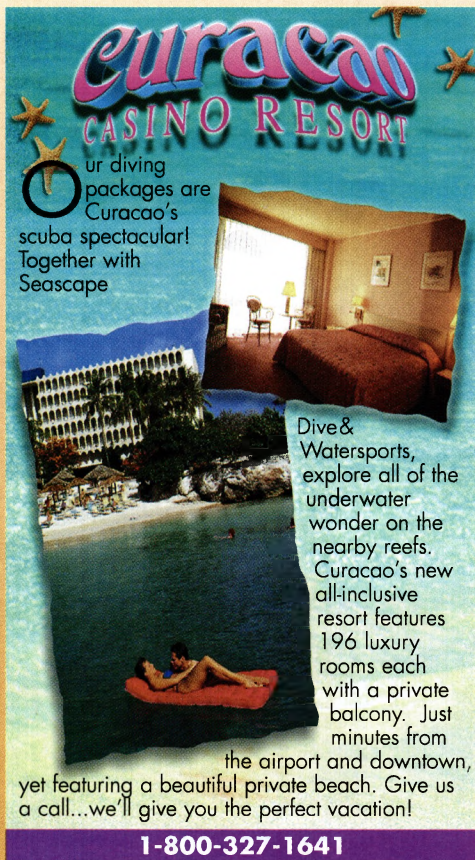
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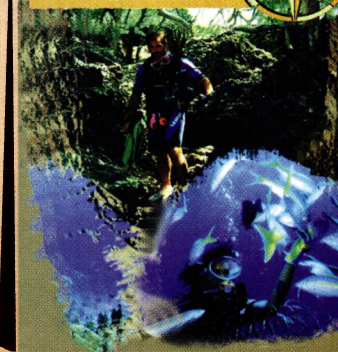
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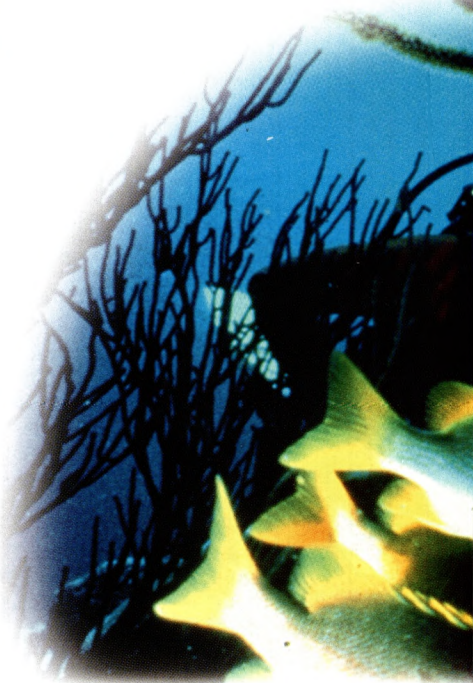
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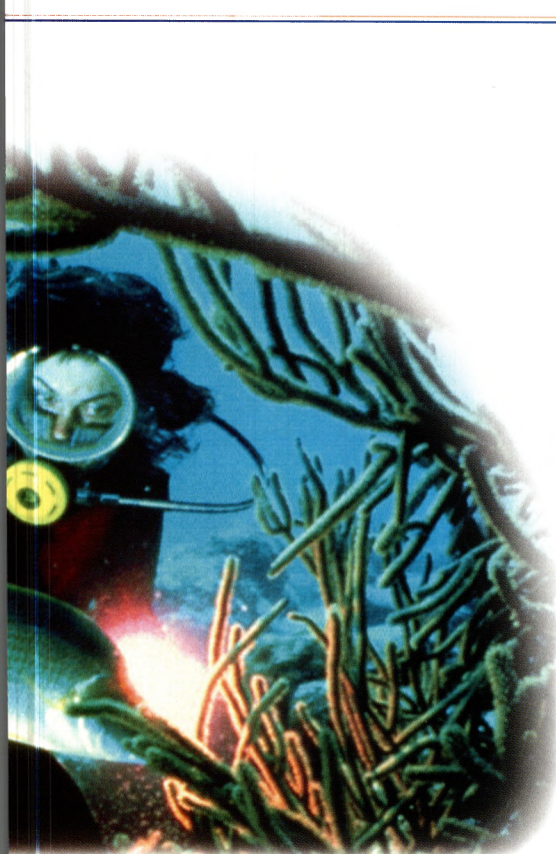


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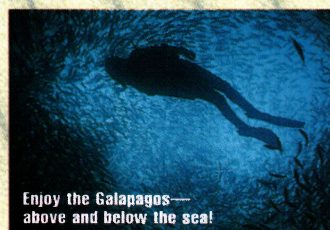


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Maldives, continued from page 69
the sand bespeak the revelry on an otherwise deserted island on the other side of the world.

نفرات الوطن دفع قرب
الله

Sailing north into less populated Raa Atoll, the marine life flourishes for the lack of people. Time spent out of the water runs together in a haze of relaxation and no obligations. Time underwater is rife with visions of unparalleled beauty in an alien world. The diving becomes a meditation; the experience becomes an addiction. Each descent reveals another species, another niche, another personality. Overhangs laden with soft coral in primaries invite me in. They drip with color and host the shy life. Schools of scarlet, blotcheye and lattice soldierfish stare back with their huge eyes. Zebra-striped oriental sweetlips hover in mid-blue, some over two feet long, each highlighted with a bright yellow outline. Glowing orange and pink tiny anthias cloud around coral heads, often in schools of hundreds. Black- and white-tipped reef sharks police the reefs, always watching from the corners of their eyes. Moray eels peek out from rifts and crags, lipsynching to some sad ballad in slow motion—their velvety skin billows in the current, their tiny eyes never leave mine. Stingrays, spotted eagle rays, nurse sharks, grey reef sharks, giant mantas, green sea turtles...the

pelagics that come to visit the reefs prove as interesting and fascinating, if not as prolific, as the reef life. On sandy bottom dives, rows of timid whitespotted garden eels wave when no one's looking, then burrow and disappear for an audience. Blackspotted puffers, plump white with the face of an arctic seal pup, and spotted puffers, night black with star-dotted white speckles, hide under ridges and move slowly away as if to avoid detection, yet always check behind them to see if anyone is following. A sportspine porcupinefish tries hard to blend in with a free-swimming school of bluefin trevally, looking lost and sheepish, but somehow maintaining his dignity. Poisonous and extremely delicate lion- and turkeyfish camouflage their bodies well, but not their beauty. And the Vlaming's unicornfish that joined me on my descent now swirl playfully above my head, adding their brilliant blue and violet stripes and streaming filaments to the dancing bubbles as I ascend.

نفرات الوطن دفع قرب
الله

On Ungooaar, the capital island of the Raa Atoll, a crowd of smiling, wide-eyed children line the dock as the tourist-laden dhoni approaches. The boat's mostly European cargo tread out onto the large flat expanse of hard-packed sand and coral-based concrete. Clad in effulgent colors, which stand in great contrast



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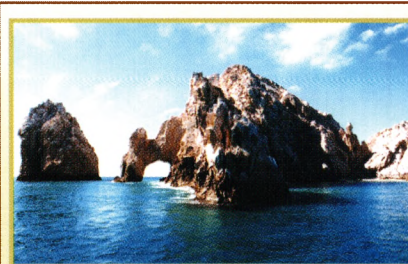
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to the muted tones of the sand and island structures and the darkness of their skin, the young women and girls cling to each other and watch the strangers pass onto their island. Some shy from the cameras, others boldly stare back into the lens. The boys skip and jump and follow, some barefoot and some shod, running ahead and circling back, intrigued by this weekly visit of white people.


The island's school is made up of two open-air buildings, with chalkboards separating the classes. With schooling not government funded, the children in school belong to parents who can afford to send them. In uniforms, the youngest class is excited by the disruption of strangers, and the small children—who learn everything in both Divehi and English right from the start—bombard their new admirers with melodic choruses of “haloe” waxing and waning with attention spans.

The island community is built up with many open-air homes constructed of coral-based adobe bricks, a hospital, mosque, general store and restaurant—all situated among the high swaying palm trees, which mask the signs of civilization from the sea. The men are scarce on the island, most are out fishing or working at a resort far to the south. The women stand in doorways and behind trees, most with babies balanced on hips, watching with quiet faces from the sidelines. The children are every-

where. Beautiful children everywhere, happy, curious, friendly, affectionate.

Once again they crowd at the dock, colorful small statures with wide grins, this time waving goodbye.

نفرين الومين وفتح قارب
الله

Five-point-eight millimeters per year. This is the prediction of average rise in sea level each year as a result of global warming. If this prediction proves true, the Maldives have approximately 150 years before the entire country is submerged, and greencheek parrotfish and blue fusiliers are dwelling where humans once did. Hopefully humans will be able to curb the effects of global warming. Only time and our best efforts will tell. For now, Maldives is living day to day. The pace of life is like nothing in the United States—people move slowly, engage in long transitional conversations, and rarely plan anything further ahead than next week. For the most part, there are no signal lights, barking dogs or pagers. The sand isn't really white, it's more the color of a fawn's belly—gentler. I plunge my toes into it at sunset, and the warm grains cloak my feet, and the evening breeze gives a tremulous voice to the palms, and I breathe the ocean and look upon a sky that never ends. 

For all the details to plan your trip, see the **Maldives Dive Travel Planner, page 131**



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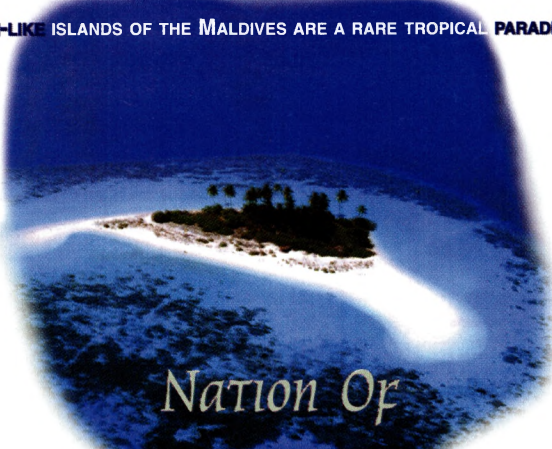
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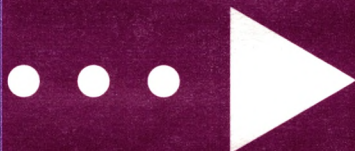




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Maldives

Pearls of the Indian Ocean

A live-aboard diving adventure offers more than just a different perspective on the Maldives, it offers thousands of exciting experiences. Each day brings new vistas, a fresh menu of dive sites and slightly different shades of blue.

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Eurodivers oversees the diving on three Maldives' live-aboard classics,

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Divers looking to be pampered will appreciate the **ISLAND EXPLORER'S** 74 cabins, including a Royal Suite, deluxe outside cabins (with picture windows) and deluxe inside cabins. All have central air-conditioning with individual controls, en-suite bathrooms, hot water and wardrobes, making them exceptionally comfortable and private retreats.

The **ISLAND EXPLORER** will take you to places where few tourists have set foot, as well as to some of the most spectacular reefs. Two sundecks, a freshwater swimming pool, a full-service restaurant, disco, karaoke and island excursions round out an Island Explorer diving adventure.

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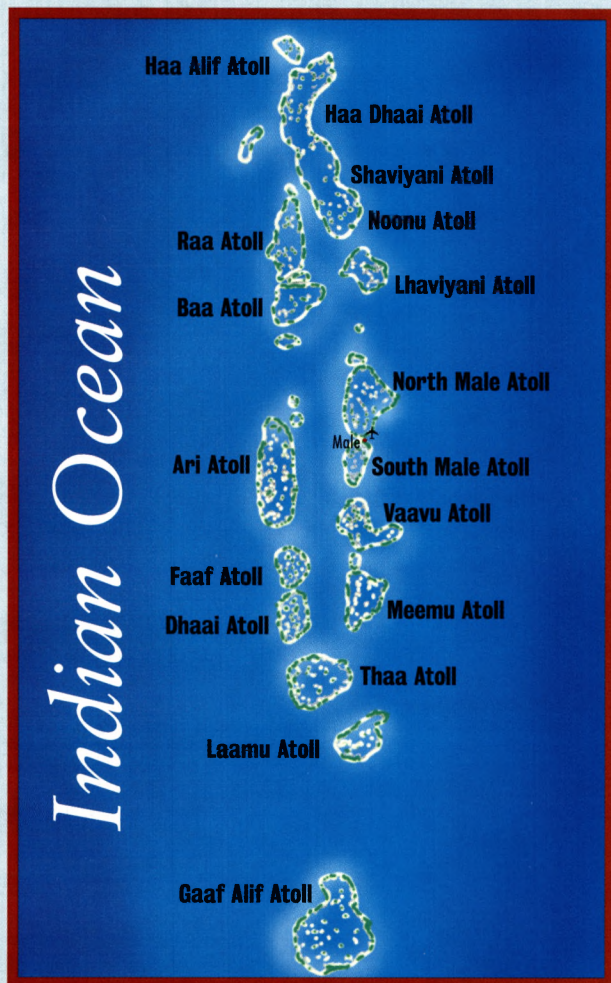
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Fax: 011-43-662-442202

Phone: 011-43-662-442204



Maldives



Time Zone: Pacific Standard Time +13

Airports: Malé International Airport is on Hulhulé Island, a 15-minute boat ride from Malé, the capital.

Airport Transfers: Air Maldives flies travelers to four airstrips on the islands. Boats, seaplanes and helicopters are also available for transfers to more remote resorts.

International Airlines: Malaysian and Singapore Airlines

Airport Fees: There is a departure tax of US \$10.

Entry Regulations: You must have a valid passport, visa, return or onward ticket and US \$10 per day of stay. If you are staying longer than 30 days, you will need an entry permit issued prior to your arrival.

Health Regulations: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for those arriving from infected areas. Typhoid and Hepatitis vaccinations are currently recommended for travel from the U.S.

Currency and Exchange Rate: The currency is the Rufiya and the exchange rate is approximately US \$1 = Rf 11.7, but U.S. dollars are widely accepted.

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz.

Language: The national language is Divehi. English is spoken on Malé and the resort islands.

Credit Cards Accepted: Major credit cards are accepted at resorts.

Communications: Telephone is available in populated areas. The country code is 960. Fax service, telex and telegram services are available at many resorts and in

Malé. The two daily newspapers have English sections.

Climate: The climate is hot and tropical. May to October is the monsoon season in the southwest and November to April in the northeast. The rainiest time of year is brought by the southwest monsoon in June and July.

Dress: Light, casual dress is appropriate (bring rainwear as well), but nudity and scant clothing are discouraged—in fact, there is a \$1000 fine if you're caught in the buff! Remember to remove your shoes when entering a mosque.

Water: Water in resort areas is generally safe, but bottled water is widely available and recommended for drinking. Be ready to pay for it, though, a 1.6-liter bottle can set you back three bucks or more.

Getting Around: Most islands are small enough that you can get around on foot. Taxis, bicycles and motorcycles are available on Malé. Small boats called *dhonis* are a common mode of travel for short trips between the islands. The government discourages travel to non-resort islands to avoid disrupting local communities.

Cuisine: According to the Maldivian Ministry of Tourism, "Maldivian food is an interesting combination of Tuna prepared in different ways." The non-tuna inclined will find that curries and other Asian foods are common throughout the islands, and that international cuisine is available on Malé. Many resorts serve buffet-style, with many options to

choose from, and on high-end resorts, additional gourmet (Italian, Thai, Mediterranean) restaurants compliment the main dining room.

Tipping: Tipping is officially discouraged, but it is appropriate to tip in resorts that do not add a service charge to the bill.

To See on Malé: Malé's many mosques are home to some of the most beautiful coral carvings in the world. The most famous carvings are in the Grand Friday Mosque, which can hold over 5000 worshippers.

Is This Entirely Necessary?: Grab up to a dozen of your pals and join the newest Maldivian resort trend: riding a giant inflatable banana hauled around by a speedboat.

Music: *Bodu beru* is a traditional musical form in which four to six drummers play progressively faster and faster, creating rhythmic and compelling music, while others dance into a frenzy. Resorts often put on *bodu beru* shows, and local bands often blend rock music with *bodu beru* rhythms.

Mystery: Archaeologists suspect the mysterious mound, called a *hawitta*, on the island of Kudahuvadhoo in South Nilandhoo Atoll is a Buddhist temple ruin, but nobody knows for sure. The island also has a reputation for beautiful tombstone carvings and its ancient mosque is known for its fine masonry.

For More Information: Email the Ministry of Tourism at info@visitmaldives.com or contact the Permanent Mission of Maldives: Tel - (212) 599-6194, Fax - (212) 972-3970.

D I V I N G

	PELAGICS	★ ★ ★ ★
	WRECKS	★
	WALLS	★ ★ ★ ★
	CORALS	★ ★ ★ ★
	REEF LIFE	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
	SHORE DIVES	★
	RECOMPRESSION CHAMBER AVAILABLE?	Yes, on Bandos

T R A V E L

	DAY OF DIVING	\$95
	ROOM/BOARD/DIVING PACKAGE PER DAY	\$250
	TOPSIDE ATTRACTIONS	Surfing, Windsurfing
	IDEAL TIME TO DIVE	November - April
	A BEER	\$4
	DINNER	\$30

Ratings reflect comparisons with other major dive destinations in the Pacific.

BILL OF FARE

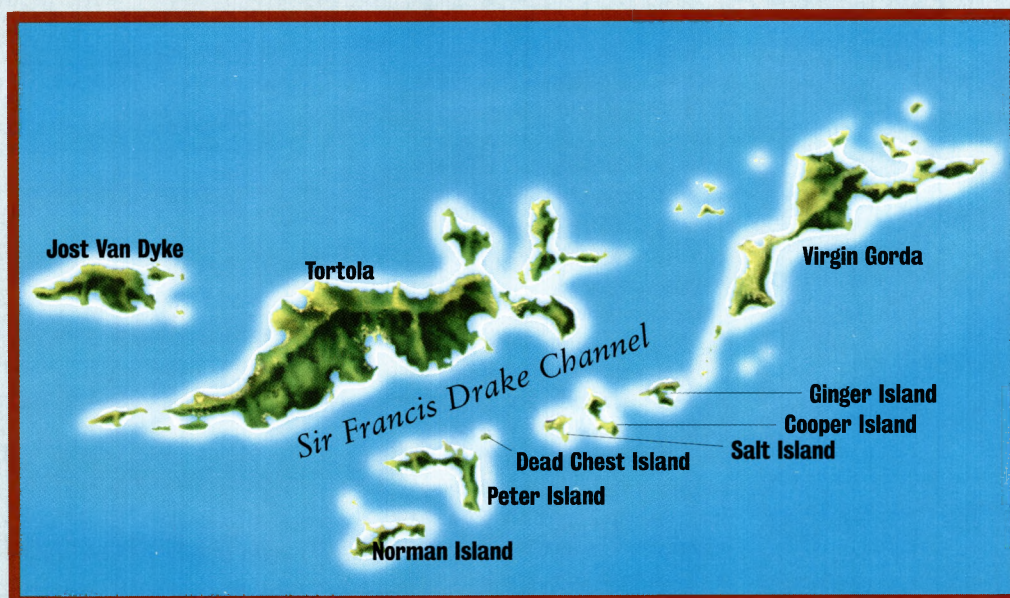
Maldives' top dining spots

The Pizza on Meerufenfushi:

When you're tired of eating fish (wonderful but at times too plentiful) and you need a change of culinary pace, head to the main bar at Meeru Island Resort. Taught by a European chef shipped over just for that purpose, Meeru's Maldivian chefs cook up a mean pizza.

Club Med: Whether you stay there or not, try to make it to Club Med for dinner one night. They have a spread so incredible it includes a Japanese food bar, French cheese and baguettes, a wide variety of desserts, and of course, many kinds of fish prepared any way you like.

British Virgin Islands



Time Zone: Pacific Standard Time +4

Airports: On Tortola, Beef Island Airport is nine miles from Road Town. Virgin Gorda Airport is three miles from Spanish Town on Virgin Gorda. There is also a small airport on the island of Anegada.

International Airlines: LIAT is the main service to the islands. Others include American Airlines, Virgin Islands Airways and Windward Island Airways International.

Airport Fees: Departure tax of US\$8.

Airport Transfers: Planes, boats and taxis are available.

Entry Regulations: Proof of citizenship is required. A passport is best; a driver's license is not sufficient.

Health Regulations: Typhoid and polio vaccinations are recommended.

Currency and Exchange rate: The US dollar is the accepted currency.

Electricity: 110/60 volts AC, 60Hz.

Language: English is the official language of the BVI.

Credit Cards Accepted: Major credit cards are accepted.

Communications: The country code is 809 494/495; the outgoing international code is 011. There are no area codes. Fax, telex and telegram services are operated by Cable & Wireless in main towns.

Climate: Rainfall is generally low and the climate is typically tropical with steady tradewinds in all seasons.

Dress: Casual, lightweight dress is appropriate, but restrict revealing beachwear to the beaches.

Water: Water is relatively safe throughout the British Virgin Islands, but chlorinated, which may cause mild stomach problems in some people. Bottled water is recommended for the first few weeks of stay.

Getting Around: Boats and airplanes are available for travel from island to island. Taxis operate on a fixed rate.

Cuisine: Seafood is the islands' specialty, but imported international cuisine is also available.

Tipping: Hotels add a 10-12% service charge to the bill.

Sunken Treasure: More than 300 ships have been wrecked on the reefs off tiny Anegada Island, making it a fascinating dive spot. Only a few doubloons have been found by treasure hunters, but who knows what is still hidden?

Best Garden: In Road Town on Tortola Island, the four-acre Joseph Reynold O'Neal Botanic Gardens has a wide variety of displays of island plants, including a fern house, orchid house and medicinal herb garden.

15 Men on a Dead Man's Chest: One of the many creatively named islands of the British Virgin Islands, Dead Chest is the tiny island between the Peter and Salt Islands. Dead Chest is the place where Blackbeard the pirate supposed-

ly abandoned several unfortunate sailors. Norman Island is another famous for pirate legends and tales of lost and buried treasure, it is also one of the islands frequently mentioned as a possible setting for Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

Take a Bath: The Baths are an enormously popular swimming and snorkeling site on Virgin Gorda. Huge boulders on the beach form lovely caves and pools to explore. It can be overcrowded so choose the time you visit carefully.

On a High-Sodium Diet?: Salt Island is named for its two ponds, which provide salt for visitors and restaurants. The salt is harvested by two old men who live on the island and will show visitors their methods of salt processing. Every year, they send a bag of salt to the British throne as rent. A popular nearby dive site is the *Rhone*, the wreck of a mail ship that sank in 1867. The *Rhone* was used as a shooting site for the film *The Deep*. Salt Island is accessible only by boat.

Observation Point: On Tortola, go up Ridge Road above Road Town to see an amazing 360-degree view of all the British Virgin Islands. Sometimes you can even see the U.S. Virgin island of St. Croix, 30 miles away.

For More Information: Contact the British Virgin Islands Tourist Board, (800) 835-8530.

D I V I N G



PELAGICS

★



WRECKS

★ ★



WALLS

★



CORALS

★ ★ ★



REEF LIFE

★ ★ ★



SHORE DIVES

★ ★



RECOMPRESSION CHAMBER AVAILABLE?

St. Thomas, USVI

T R A V E L



DAY OF DIVING

\$80



ROOM/BOARD/DIVING PACKAGE PER DAY

\$70 (for multi-day package)



TOPSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Bomba's Full-moon Party



IDEAL TIME TO DIVE

November-April



A BEER

\$2



DINNER

\$25-\$35

Ratings reflect comparisons with other major dive destinations in the Caribbean.

BILL OF FARE

BVI's top dining spots

The Chicken Buf: A local lunch place in Road Town on Tortola, their specialty is, well, chicken. Don't know if you'll be lickin' your fingers, but the fare at this restaurant could definitely give the Colonel a run for his money.

Flash of Beauty: Looking out over the beach, this restaurant on Jackbay on Anegada Island serves wonderful lobster, and a wide variety of other fresh seafood is available.

Mario's: For a taste of the local cuisine, check out Mario's in Road Town. You'll find a lot of fresh fish, stews and mild island flavor, plus a tiny taste of what it's like *not* to be a tourist in the BVI.

British Columbia



Time Zone: Pacific Standard Time

Airports: Vancouver Airport, 11 miles from the city, is served by airlines from the US, Europe and the Far East. The smaller airports are Victoria, Prince Rupert and Quesnel.

Airlines: All major airlines. Smaller airlines serve routes only within the province, as do Air Canada, Air BC and British Airways.

Airport Fees: Vancouver has a departure tax of CAN\$20 for international departures and CAN\$10 for departures to other North American destinations, including Hawaii and Mexico.

Airport Transfers: Taxis and public transportation are available.

Entry Regulations: Non-US visitors need a passport. US citizens need proof of citizenship and a picture ID.

Health Regulations: None. Milk is pasteurized and dairy products are safe for consumption. Local meat, poultry, seafood, fruit and vegetables are safe to eat.

Currency and Exchange Rate: The currency of Canada is the Canadian Dollar (CAN\$). 1US\$ is approximately 1.35 CAN\$.

Electricity: 110 volts AC, 60 Hz. American-style (flat) two-pin plugs are standard.

Language: Although Canada is officially

bilingual (English and French), English is more common in British Columbia.

Credit Cards Accepted: Most international credit cards are accepted.

Communications: Most public phones operate on 25-cent coins. There is a reduced rate 6pm–8am Monday to Friday and 12pm Saturday to 8am Monday. Full IDD is available. Country code: 1. Outgoing international code: 011. Fax services are available in most hotels at standardized rates.

Press: There is no national daily newspaper as such, but Toronto's *The Globe & Mail* has national distribution. Since Canada is bilingual, there are also French newspapers, published in seven cities.

Climate: Coastal British Columbia is one of the mildest regions with very warm summers and relatively mild winters. Heavy snowfalls occur in the Rockies.

Recommended Clothing: Lightweight for most of the summer with warmer clothes for evenings. Carry waterproof clothing throughout the year.

Water: Water is safe to drink.

Getting Around: **Air**—There are several smaller airlines that provide good connection within the province. **Sea**—Two ferry services link Vancouver Island with the

mainland and there are several passenger-only services that connect Victoria and Vancouver with harbors downtown. A high-speed connection between Victoria and Seattle (USA) is available five times a day and takes only three-and-a-half hours. **Rail**—Via Rail Canada, the only passenger rail carrier in the country, still operates extensive services across Canada.

Cuisine: The cuisine of the province is enhanced by English traditions. The Pacific Ocean yields a great variety of seafood, including king crab, oysters, shrimp and other shellfish, as well as cod, haddock and salmon, which are smoked, pan-fried, breaded, baked, canned or barbecued, and complemented by local vegetables. Victoria creams, a famous chocolate delicacy derived from a recipe dating back to 1885, are exported worldwide from British Columbia. The original confectioner's shop is situated in Victoria.

Drink: Sparkling wines are produced in Okanagan Valley and all usual alcoholic beverages are widely available.

Tipping: About 10-15% is customary.

Don't Watch Your Age: Drinking age is 19 in British Columbia.

Watch the Time: Taverns (pubs) can only stay open until 1am, bars and cabarets until 2am.

A Trip You Should Not Miss: Save one day for the 15-hour, one-way daylight voyage from Port Hardy on the northern tip of Vancouver Island along the Inside Passage to Prince Rupert. Sea and coast are immensely impressive.

Miss On That Trip: Queen Charlotta Island is an adventurous side-trip with good hunting opportunities.

Catch A Fish: Campbell River on Vancouver Island is world famous for salmon fishing.

Don't Catch A Cold: Opportunities for watersports such as canoeing and white-water river rafting are widely available in the area. Countless cold rivers and lakes caused by watersheds from the Rocky Mountains provide the perfect playground.

Best Overwater Flora: Visit the Botanical Gardens of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver.

Best Dry Diving: The Undersea Gardens in Victoria (Vancouver Island) offer a dry diver's-eye view of harbor life.

D I V I N G



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WRECKS

★ ★



WALLS

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CORALS

★



REEF LIFE

★ ★ ★ ★



SHORE DIVES

★ ★ ★



RECOMPRESSION CHAMBER AVAILABLE?

Yes

T R A V E L



DAY OF DIVING

\$35



ROOM/BOARD/DIVING PACKAGE PER DAY

\$140



TOPSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Spelunking, Museums



IDEAL TIME TO DIVE

September - March



A BEER

\$2



DINNER

\$15

Ratings reflect comparisons with other major dive destinations on the eastern Pacific.

BILL OF FARE

B.C.'s top dining spots

Troller's Fish-N-Chips: Floating in the middle of a fishing fleet, this eatery is full of character. Halibut and cod are the fish of choice.

Lighthouse Bistro: Great lunches and harbor views, here you'll be serenaded by mid-day cannon booms from the old bastion fort.

Filthy McNasty's Café: This one wins for restaurant with the best name. Down pints of island brewed draft beers, or imbibe cider (alcohol content: 6.5%) in four flavors—apple, peach, pear, berries. Order lamb, salmon, steamed clams, mussels, crab, prawns...y'know, island fare.

The Grotto: Go for dinner, find fabulous food, amazing service.

Puerto Galera

Time Zone: Pacific Standard Time -8

Airport: Ninoy Aquino International Airport is 7.5 miles southeast of Manila. Mactan International Airport is 45 minutes away from the city's center.

Airport Transfers: Buses and taxis run to the city.

Entry Regulations: Passports valid for one year and return tickets are required. No visa is required if the visit is under 21 days.

Health Regulations: Cholera and malaria are risks; consult your doctor regarding vaccinations. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required from all visitors coming from infected areas.

Currency and Exchange: The currency is the Philippine peso and the exchange rate is US\$1 = P31.5.

Airport Fees: There is a departure tax of P500 (about US\$16), payable in Philippine pesos only.

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 60Hz. 110 volts is available in many hotels.

Domestic Transport: From Manila, there are several options for getting to Puerto Galera. Your hotel or resort can arrange for a private car to pick you up in Manila and deliver you to a waiting *banca* boat in Batangas for the 40-minute crossing. You can take the Sikat bus and ferry, which leaves Manila from the Centrepoint Hotel at 9am sharp every day and costs around US\$8 one way. Several bus companies operate regular services from Manila to Batangas and other ferries ply the Batangas to Puerto

Galera route until early afternoon. Technically they operate on a fixed schedule, but more often they leave whenever there are enough passengers. (Don't take a ferry that looks rickety or overcrowded; there is a high ferry accident rate in the Philippines.) You can usually pick up a *banca* willing to make the crossing for between US\$40 and \$80, depending on your bargaining skills.

Language: Filipino is the national language, and English is widely spoken. At least 80 other dialects and languages are spoken on the islands.

Credit Cards Accepted: Most major credit cards are accepted.

Communications: The country code is 63 and the outgoing international code is 00. Many hotels, businesses and government offices have fax services.

Climate: The Philippines have a breezy, tropical climate with cool nights. The rainy season is June to October with occasional typhoons.

Dress: Light, casual clothes are appropriate, but bring warmer clothes for the evenings and a raincoat during the rainy season.



Cuisine: Spanish, Chinese, Malay and Japanese flavors are evident in Filipino food. Rice is a staple and is often served with barbecued meats, stews, and seafood.

Papayas, mangoes, *rambutans*, bananas, and guavas are some of the fruits grown in the Philippines.

Picnic Spot: Bring a picnic to Tamaraw Falls, a 423-ft. waterfall about 45 minutes away from town by jeepney. Some of the pools are open for swimming. There is a small entrance fee and a charge for a table.

Museum: The Excavation Museum in Puerto Galera Town has a large collection of shells, Ming burial jars and Siamese and Chinese pottery from the 15th to the 19th centuries on display.

For More Information: Contact the Philippine Center in New York: Tel - (212) 575-7915, Fax - (212) 302-6759.

Cozumel

Time Zone: Pacific Standard Time + 2

Airport: Cozumel International Airport

International Airlines: Continental, Mexicana, AeroCozumel

Entry Regulations: Americans and Canadians need a tourist card and proof of citizenship—passport, birth certificate or other national ID with a photograph.

Health Regulations: Cholera, typhoid and polio vaccinations recommended. Certificates of vaccination against yellow fever and cholera are required for travelers arriving from infected areas.

Currency and Exchange Rate: Local currency is the peso. The exchange rate is US\$1 = 8.35 nuevo peso, but is highly variable.

Airport fees: There is a departure tax of US\$12.

Water: Water marked as drinking water in hotels is safe; all other water should be sterilized.

Credit Cards Accepted: Major credit cards are accepted in the larger towns and resorts.

Electricity: 110 volts/60 cycles, the same as in the U.S.

Language: Spanish, but English is widely spoken.

Communications: Large hotels have fax, telex and telegram. The country code is 52 and the outgoing international code is 98.

Climate: Expect warm weather year-round. June through October is the rainy season.

Dress: Light and casual dress is recommended, but bring along a sweater or jacket as well.

Getting Around: Mopeds and bikes are available for rent. Taxis aren't metered, so ask about the fare before you hop in and accept the ride.

Cuisine: International restaurants abound, and Cozumel has a reputation for good Italian food. Mexican cuisine, with beans and rice as staples, is available everywhere. It takes a flavorful Yucatán twist on the flavors typical in northern Mexico.

Tipping: Standard gratuity is 15-20%.

Navigation Past and Present: South of Chankanaab Lagoon you will find Celarain Lighthouse, which you can climb with permission from the caretaker. Beside the lighthouse is a small ruin used as a navigational guide by the Maya.

Turtle Watching: Sea turtles on Cozumel lay their eggs on



the eastern shore at night. The Museum of the Island of Cozumel in San Miguel organizes trips to watch them from May to September.

A History Routed In Gum: When chewing gum got popular in the US in the 19th century, Cozumel profited. The island was a port-of-call on the *chicle* (gum) export route from Central America.

Gimme The Specs: The island lies 12 miles off the Yucatán Peninsula, and measures 30 miles long by 10 miles wide.

For More Information: Contact the Mexico Government Tourist Office: Tel - (800) 446-3942, Fax - (310) 203-8319.

Fiji's Best

photo courtesy of the Fiji Visitors Bureau

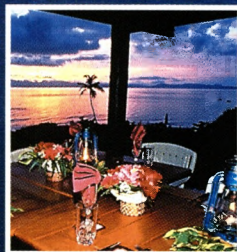
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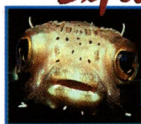
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Landfall Productions—All the latest exotic trips and prices, plus some good photography. ecotravel.com/landfall

Great Destinations—Pacific Dive Specialists for 25 years. www.skindiver.com

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Reef & Rainforest—Exotic customised dive and travel itineraries. www.reefrainfrst.com

Sea the World—Check out "The Alternative" dive vacation. seatheworld.com

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Underwater Frontiers—Worldwide travel for the diving enthusiast! www.uwfrontiers.com

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Down Under Divers—all the latest on the Great Barrier Reef from the folks in Cairns, Queensland. G'day! www.ozemail.com.au/~dudive

Taka Dive Adventures—The Coral Sea is your dream and we'll take you there. ozemail.com.au/~takadive

Rum Runner—World class diving aboard a world class live-aboard! www.internetnorth.com.au/rumrunner

Quicksilver Dive—The quickest way to dive the GBR. www.ozemail.com.au/~quick3

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Inn of Last Resort—Ask for the Bay Islands internet special. www.dive.com/innlast.html

Roatan Charters—Bay Islands specialists since 1981. www.roatan.com

Belize

Belize Tradewinds—Need help planning an adventure to Belize?? See our site. www.belizenet.com/tradewinds.html

SunBreeze Hotel—the perfect vacation hide-away to appreciate the natural charm of San Pedro. www.belizeit.com/sunbreeze

Rum Point Inn—Placencia's first dive dedicated resort. www.belizenet.com/rumpoint.html

Bonaire

Great Adventures Bonaire—Bonaire's world-class dive operation and luxury resort. www.interknowledge.com/bonaire/harbour-village.html

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Baskin in the Sun—The home of spoiled divers and unspoiled diving. www.dive-baskin.com

Sail With The Stars—180° from ordinary on the yacht *Windsprit*. www.sailwiththestars.com/dive

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Ocean Frontiers—Dive Grand Cayman's east end with the pros. www.oceanfrontiers.com

Little Cayman Beach Resort—State-of-the-art diving at one of the top dive destinations in the Caribbean. www.braclittle.com

Treasure Island Divers—Located on the south end of Seven Mile Beach—where the treasure is! www.deepedge.com/TIDivers

Sunset House—No hassle, unlimited shore diving right off the hotel backyard. www.sunset-house.com

Costa Rica

Adventure Dive Tours & Travel—Specializing exclusively in Costa Rica. www.adventuredive.com

Curaçao

Habitat Curacao—Minutes from the best diving in Curacao. www.empg.com/maduro

Cozumel

Dive Paradise—Dive with the best in Cozumel. www.dparadise.com

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Trip-n-Tour—Dedicated to extensive coverage of Micronesia & Fiji. ella.netpoint.net/empg/trip-n-tour

Palau Visitors Authority—Come discover Palau on the net. www.visit-palau.com

Hawaii

Kona Coast Divers—Hawaiian diving the way that it should be. www.konacoastdivers.com

Lahaina Divers—Maui's largest, most comfortable dive boats. PADI 5-Star Facility www.lahainadivers.com

Maui Dive Shop—Complete info on dive tours, instruction, locations and conditions in Maui. www.maui.net/~mauidive

Indonesia

Ena Dive Center—Adventure to the world under the sea of Indonesia. www.indo.com/diving/ena

Indonesian Cactus Divers—Diving excursions, courses, packages, dolphin tours, diving safaris, more. www.iijnet.oi.jp-inc-bali

Florida

Florida Keys Dive Center—Fulfill your vacation fantasy in the Keys. www.floridakeysdivetr.com

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Dive Inn Bonaire—Conveniently located on the waterfront in downtown Kralendijk, next door to Sunset Inn. Dive Inn offers accommodations including oceanfront rooms, apartments and villas with kitchens. Dive operations feature 2 boats, ample rental gear, custom boat charters and 24-hour shore diving. 800-328-2288 Fax: 011-599-7-8513

British Virgin Islands

Prospect Reef Resort & Harbour—Diver friendly village-style resort offering hotel-dive packages from \$420. Homebase for award-winning dive facility, "Baskin in the Sun". Central to prime dive sites, near town. Instruction, specialty classes, custom certification, underwater photography. 800-356-8937 USA, 800-463-3608 CAN.

Fischer's Cove Beach Hotel—Beautiful Caribbean beachside setting on the southwest side of Virgin Gorda, BVI, overlooking the Sir Francis Drake Channel. Unique triangular cottages positioned for privacy and breezy comfort. Tastefully decorated romantic cottages with kitchenette, microwave, coffee-maker, ceiling fan and private shower. Comfortable hotel suites—ocean view with ceiling fan, garden view with AC, all units with refrigerator, coffee-maker, telephone cable TV and private shower.

Babysitting to fax services, everything is taken care of by our friendly and knowledgeable staff. Enjoy scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, sailing, island tours, island excursions, romantic beach picnics, watersports rentals and much more...

Fischer's Cove Beach Hotel, P.O. Box 60, The Valley, Virgin Gorda, BVI; 809-495-5252; fax: 809-495-5820.

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Cayman Islands

Cayman Diving Lodge—Adventure diving at Grand Cayman's untamed East End. Grand Cayman's best kept secret! Escape the cruise crowds & tourist diving and experience the Cayman of Yesterday. Enjoy total relaxation and the finest diving in the Cayman Islands. Small dedicated beachfront diving lodge for divers seeking a personalized dive vacation. Full-service dive resort with all services (hotel, dive operation, open-air restaurant & bar, dive shop, private beach, boat dock) conveniently on-site. Our professional staff also live on the property. **ALL-INCLUSIVE DIVE PACKAGES** include A/C beachfront accommodations, 3 meals each day, diving customized to meet **your** needs, taxes, service charges, & airport transfers. **800-TLC-DIVE**. Fax: 806-798-7568. Email: dive@lodge@aol.com <http://caymandive.lodge.com>

Jeff's Cayman Island Guest Homes—3 lovely private homes 2 blocks from the best snorkeling on 7-mile beach! US \$500/wk for 1 bed/1 bath. \$700/wk for 2 bed/1 bath. \$1000/wk for 2 bed/2 bath. AC, TV, VCR, microwave, BBQ deck, hammocks on lush 1/3 acre. Fully equipped. References provided. (800) 484-7694/5333. Jeff Kingstad, owner, dive instructor, pole vault champion. Tel/Fax: (345) 949-3742

Little Cayman Beach Resort—World Class Diving combined with the #1-rated Dive Operation in the Caribbean. Deluxe accommodations, pool, jacuzzi, tennis, and fitness center, onsite photo shop. Experience live-aboard diving from the comfort of a superior resort. **800-327-3835** Email: bestdiving@aol.com

Ocean Frontiers—Dive Grand Cayman's East End. Pristine Diving, small groups, new boat, personal service, custom diving and accommodation packages. Call/Fax: 809-947-7500

Sunset House—The only resort in Grand Cayman designed by divers for divers: Our clientele is 95% divers. It's also the only resort with its own coral reef with modern and ancient shipwrecks in shallow water right offshore. **800-854-4767** or 809-949-7111 Fax: 809-949-7101

Adventure Dive Tours & Travel
 Costa Rica offers all activities above and below the water in this new adventure dive destination for the nature lover. There are a variety of dive resorts and lodges to pick from in Costa Rica: from B&B's to deluxe beach and jungle lodges. Costa Rica has active volcanoes, great river rafting and kayaking, just to mention a few of the activities you can do. Try a Treetop Trails Canopy Tour at Rincon de la Vieja, (see Dive Travel Spring '97). We offer bulk discounted airfares, 4x4 rentals and all dive and tour options. Live-aboards to Cocos Island. Special rates for groups and green season. Call: **800-938-9767** Fax: 415-364-9289. Visit www.adventuredive.com or email adventrdiv@aol.com


Costa Rica


El Ocotal Beach Resort—Experience El Ocotal Beach Resort, a small luxurious hideaway where scuba divers relax and enjoy the marvels of the Pacific Ocean in year-round summer weather. Affordable individual and group packages available. Call Landfall Productions: **800-525-3833**

Cozumel


Aquaworld/Cozumel: multi-lingual watersports services, PADI Instruction Beginner/Divemaster. SCUBA dive and snorkel trips, SubSea Explorer adventures, and Eco-Conscious Educational Tours. www.aquaworldcozumel.com
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US - 1 888 266 9888
Mex - Tel & Fax 011 52 987 2 1210

Fiesta Inn—Relax and enjoy one of Cozumel's best hotels; the Fiesta inn, while experiencing Cozumel's other treasure: its beautiful coral reefs. Great price saving packages available for individual's and groups. Call Landfall Productions: **800-525-3833**, or in CA 510-794-1599

Casa Cozumel Vacation Villas & Condos
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 Customise it in Cozumel! Want to do something special? Visit the sites at **your own pace** in **small groups** to find specific marine life? Well, that's what Cha Cha Cha Dive Shop offer to all its divers. With over 12 years experience diving in these waters we have the necessary knowledge of eco-systems and more. Drop us a fax, we'll put together the perfect itinerary! Phone/fax: **011-52-987-22331**

Paradisu Cozumel—5 Star Luxury Resort Located on the Loveliest Beach in Cozumel. The Finest in Everything for one inclusive price. First Class amenities to include Watersports, Horseback Riding, Steam Room, Gymnasium, Nightly Shows, and Daily Entertainment. Call: (888) 341-5993 or Email: paradisu@cozumel.czm.com.mx

Scuba Shack
 Located on the beach between the Sol Caribe & Casa Del Mar hotels we specialize in personal service for groups of any size. Hop on the boat right on our dock, or shore dive to the plane. For all your diving needs including instruction and certification, call us, the water is always clear. Tel/Fax: 011-52-987-23836 Email: scubas@cozumel.finned.com.mx

Curaçao

Coral Cliff Diving—Curaçao's most personal resort. 1 bedroom duplex villas available on a weekly/ monthly basis. A Padi Dive Center on our property is only minutes away by boat from Curaçao's best diving. Non divers enjoy a swimming pool with swim up bar, Jacuzzi and children's pool, tennis and miniature golf. Phone: **800-451-9376** Fax: 011-599-964-1781

Eden Rock Dive Center—PADI 5 Star facility at the Holiday Beach Hotel. We dive and snorkel from land, from boat, from air. Call: **800-400-5244** Fax: 011-599-9628878. Email: HOLBEACH@cura.net or visit www.HOL-BEACH.COM

Habitat Curacao—On the southwest coast, minutes from the best diving sites offering 56 deluxe junior suites and 20 cottages with kitchenettes and patios. 24-hour diving and snorkeling. Call: **800-327-6709** Fax: 305-438-4220 Email: maduro@netpoint.net

Dominica

Nature Island Dive—Located in the heart of Soufriere-Scott's Head Marine Reserve. Dominica's only complete adventure outfitter offers: Scuba Diving, Snorkeling Trips, Mountain Biking and Sea Kayaking. Seaside cottages for rent. Call: **809-449-8181**

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Trip n Tour—A Dive Travel Leader for 15 years. For brochure and information: Call **1-800-917-2243**

Nai'a Cruises Fiji—The finest diving deserves the finest diving service, and the luxury live-aboard NAI'A has set new standards in every way. Having opened up **entirely new dive sites**, NAI'A Cruises is an additive first-class live-aboard in Fiji. Treat yourself to an unforgettable dive vacation, but beware—you may never want to dive anywhere else again. Call: **800-247-3483** or Fax: 206-441-5431

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Conch Republic Divers—The finest and friendliest diving in the Upper Keys! With a comfortable boat and an experienced crew—reefs, wrecks or drift dives—let us show you *our* Florida Keys! Call: **800-274-DIVE** Email: ckandtom@fla.net

Florida Keys Dive Center—Become a PADI INSTRUCTOR...Enjoy your IDC in a resort environment. Pricing including lodging available. A PADI 5-Star Resort and IDC Center. We offer packages with Ocean Pointe Suites-1 and 2 bedroom condominiums for the best Florida Keys have to offer. Call: **800-433-8946** Fax: 305-852-1293 Email: scuba@floridakeysdivectr.com

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Kona Coast Divers—Hawaii's pre-eminent dive operation since 1967. Two custom dive boats, High-Tec rental inventory, the largest dive gear and merchandise selection on the island. A staff of highly motivated professional instructors and guides. We spare no expense in the pursuit of excellence. Call: 808-329-8802 Fax: 808-329-5741 or visit our website at <http://konacoastdivers.com>

The Mauna Lani Bay Hotel and Bungalows—Dive the pristine reefs and uncrowded dive sites of the Kohala Coast and stay at the island's only AAA 5-Diamond rated hotel. Mauna Lani Sea Adventures has operated for over 15 years and offers exceptional diving for the beginner to the seasoned with its two 6-pax dive boats. Also offer daily cruises aboard 50' sailing catamaran. Call: **800 367-2323** or 808-885-7883 Fax: 808-885-8848

Hawaiian Divers—Hawaii's Premier Dive Facilities offers MANTA NIGHT DIVES, BLUE WATER SHARK CAGE DIVES AND SPECTACULAR SOUTH PACIFIC GUIDED DIVE ADVENTURES. FOR THE BEST DIVE EXCURSIONS, TECH COURSES, PACKAGES, DOLPHIN/WHALE WATCH, WRECK DIVES, CALL 800-525-7234 or 808-329-5662. To experience our blue warm water check out our website at <http://hawaiian-divers.com>

Indonesia

Indonesian Cactus Divers—Dive the last paradise with Indonesian Cactus Divers, a 5-Star Dive Shop and organizer. Diving excursions, courses, packages, dolphin tours, diving safaris, more. Call: **800-538-2254** Fax: 011-361-462164 E: pasarl@aol.com Site: www.iijnet.oj.it-inc-bali

Kungkungan Bay Resort—What you've hear about diving in Indonesia is true...plus Kungkungan Bay Resort has more: •More dive sites •Marine life •Photo opportunities •Variety of cuisines •Privacy & serenity. Located in the Lembah Strait, our dive sites are unaffected by seasonal weather. We have accommodations and diving year round. Call: 510-825-1939

M/V Baruna—This safari-style motor vessel will take you on a fascinating journey to exotic and secluded tropical islands in the Indonesian Archipelago. Great Destinations: **800-741-2178** Fax: 916-448-7192

Sangalaki, Borneo Divers—Large mantas, cuttlefish and a huge lake teeming with non-stinging jellyfish. All of this plus a 600-foot drop-off around the island. For GIANT encounters in Sangalaki, Call: 011-60-88-22-2226 Fax: 011-60-88-22-1550 Email: bdivers@po.jaring.my

Jamaica



Jamaqua Dive Centre—PADI 5-star facility in Runaway Bay and Montego Bay, personalized service, dive packages, 3 dives daily, night dives, photo and video center on site. Tel: (876) 973-4845 Fax: (876) 973-4875 E: jamaqua@infochan.com or www.jamaqua.com

Doctors Cave Beach Hotel—Unlike the all-inclusive, we cater to those who want to see Jamaica, both above and beyond the surface. We are close to great diving facilities. Call: (876) 952-4355 Fax: (876) 952-5204 Email: dcbh@toj.com

Negril Scuba Centre—PADI Dive shop, lessons, Hotel-Dive Packages, Full certifications, U/W Video Service, Night Dive Specialist, 3 Dives Daily. PADI, SSI, IDEA. P.O. Box 49, Negril, Jamaica. Phone/Fax: (876) 957-4425

Malaysia

Borneo Divers, Sipadan Island—A diving paradise. Golden beaches, clear turquoise waters teeming with marine life. Whether you seek the tranquility of snorkeling in shallow coral gardens or pulse-pounding encounters with big pelagics, Borneo Divers has it all. Call: 011-60-88-22226 Fax: 011-60-88-221550 Email: bdivers@po.jaring.my

Layang-Layang Island Resort—300 Kilometers in the middle of the South China Sea is a brand-new resort and an underwater kingdom of big pelagics and brilliant corals. Feel the tranquility of a world far removed from the crowds of city living. Call: 011-60-3-243-3166 Fax: 01160-3-243-3177 Email: layang@po.jaring.my

Pan Borneo Tours—Simply the best diving resort on Borneo Island and only minutes away from the world-renowned dive sites of Sipadan Island, Sipadan Water Village combines the best in accommodation and dive sites to offer you a complete diving experience and holiday in the sun. Call: 011-6-088-221221/213233 Fax: 011-6-088-219233 Email: panborn@po.jaring.my

Maldives

Worldwide Vacations/Sub Aqua—Resorts & Live-aboards for over 25 years. Divers' paradise in the Indian Ocean. Exquisite resorts, incredible diving. A variety of more than 15 islands. Our own dive centers are NAUI Pro Facilities. (800) 841-8222 Email: worldvac@gate.net or visit www.worldtours.com

Eurodivers—With over 25 years experience in the Maldives, our international crew will make your holiday an unforgettable experience. Our 13 5-star facilities and instructor development centers offer instruction at all levels as well as activities for non-divers. Tel: (011) 43-662-442204 Fax: (011) 43-662-442202

Micronesia

Carp Island Resort/Palau Diving Center—Intimate Carp Island Resort—No cars, no TV, no telephones, just a deserted white-sand beach and the best diving in the Pacific. Call: 011-680-488-2978 Fax: 011-680-488-3155

Fish N' Fins—visit the famous sites like Blue Corner, Big Dropoff and German Channel with the most experienced diving center in Palau. In business for 20 years, Fish 'N Fins is responsible for finding all of the major sites—and we come up with new ones every week! Call: 800-247-3483 Fax: 206-441-5431



Kosrae Village Resort—Traditional Thatched Bungalows at the Waters' Edge • Restaurant & Lounge • PADI Resort & Dive Center • Handicap Accessible • Email: KosraeVillage@mail.fm or visit www.KosraeVillage.com Call: 011.691.370.3483 Fax: 011.691.370.5839

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Palau Visitors Authority—Sparkling crystal blue waters invitingly splash upon the sun-kissed beaches that skirt the tropical green of the Rock Islands. Reefs teem with an endless variety of marine life to produce an ever-changing color kaleidoscope. A charming people greet you from the shores with the warmth of their smiles. Call: 680-488-2793/1930 Fax: 680-488-1453/1725 www.visit-palau.com
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Philippines



Cocktail Divers, Inc.—dive the Philippines with Cocktail Divers! Dive Puerto Galera, Dumaguete, Palawan, Bohol. 12 days no-limit diving, including cottage, private transfer, one night in Manila for US \$890 by a minimum of 2 person. Tel/Fax: 0063-2-8921443 E: cdiver@vasia.com <http://vasia.com/cdiver>



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Saba



Saba Reef Divers—Every Dive You Ever Dreamed Of...Custom diving escorted by our team of owner-instructors. Recreational • Nitrox • Sea-kayaks Check out our website and email us for a free Saba diving packet! www.sabareef.com, email sabareef@aol.com. Tel: 011.599.4.62541 Fax: 11.599.4.62653

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Statia

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Club Carib—Enjoy the best "Southern-Styled, Out-Island" Caribbean diving vacation. All-inclusive land packages starting from \$599.00 dbl. occupancy. Includes unlimited diving, accommodations, 3 meals per day and airport transfers. FREE-for a limited time, open water certification for your non-diving companion. Call: 800-581-2582 E: helene@clubcarib.com or www.clubcarib.com



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Turtle In Divers—Located in the center of the "beautiful by Nature" island of Providenciales. We offer PADI and NAUI instruction—introductory resort courses, open water referrals, complete certification. We dive the world class walls, snorkel, and island hop on our state of the art 45' catamaran or our 28' Dive Express—equipped with fresh water showers and head. Come fly with us on our 28' Parasail boat. Hotel/Dive packages starting at \$672 (summer) 7 nights/6 days diving. Call: 800-359-3483 or 809-941-5389 Email: TurtleIn@aol.com

Come visit with the cool folks of Dive Travel Magazine at one of these hot dive shows coming up in your backyard:

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Beneath the Sea • Secaucus
March 20-22, 1998

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See you soon!

Check with the Pros!

The following are travel agents and retail specialists who have participated in the Dive Travel Association seminars this past year. Those indicated with stars have most recently enrolled in the Association. The Dive Travel Association acts as a clearinghouse for information and educational tools about all matters dive travel-related. For more information about joining, call 408.459.6188. For a complete listing of all participating travel agents/tour operators, dive retailers, airlines, dive operators, live-aboards, resorts and tourism offices...check our web site, www.divetravel.com.

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 Roberta Balser, FANTASEA CRUISES & TRAVEL*, MI
 Tish Naaktgeboren, Sandy Paws Diving, MO
 Don West, WEST TRAVEL SERVICE*, MS
N. Carolina, New Jersey & New York
 Sherry McCallus, Travel Travel*, NC
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 Hannah Mandelbaum, HO RIZON TRAVEL*, NJ
 Heidi Koch, EMPRESS TRAVEL*, NJ
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 Vicki Koehler, SHORT HILLS TOURS*, NJ
 William Mueller, CROSS ROADS TRAVEL*, NJ
 Azizah Aziz, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, NY

WELCOME!

Hot-off-the-presses, a big welcome to our newest members: Blue Cargo Dive Destinations, Snyder Specialty Tours, Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, Escortropic Travel & Ticket Agency, Sun Kachina Travel, Fiji Dive & Worldwide Travel Specialists, Underwater Adventures, Aquarius Travel, Fiji Visitors Bureau!

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 Carolyn Griffith, TIMCO*, TX
 David Hughey, Classic Intl Travel, TX
 David W. Wise, David Does Travel, TX
 Dawn Loughlin, Dreams & Things, TX
 Gary Sapone, Blues Traveler, TX
 Jackie Mitchell, CAYMAN ISL DEPT. OF TOURISM*, TX
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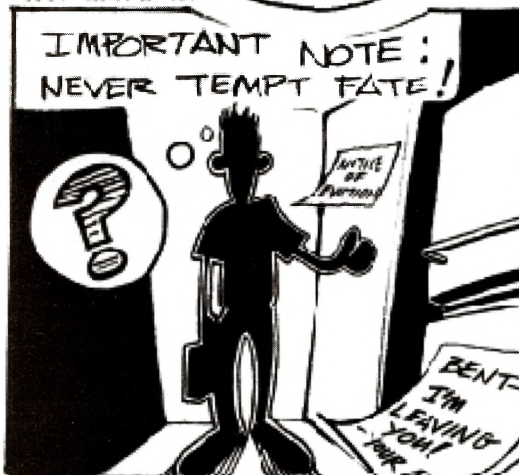
April 17—Chicago, IL
OURWORLDUNDERWATER

The Amazing Adventures of **Bent McSnorkel**

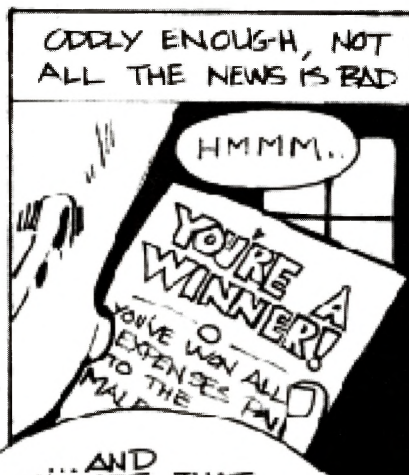


LIFE IS HARD!
STRESS LEVELS ARE AT AN ALL TIME HIGH
SMALL WARS BREAKING OUT LIKE BRUSH FIRES
AND BENTLEY MCSNORKEL HAS JUST BECOME ANOTHER
VICTIM OF CORPORATE DOWNSIZING!

©1997 John Newman



IMPORTANT NOTE:
NEVER TEMPT FATE!



ODDLY ENOUGH, NOT
ALL THE NEWS IS BAD

HMMM...



ACCORDING TO THE CHD
RAND M'NALLY, AS FAR
AWAY AS YOU CAN GET
WITHOUT A
SPACE
SHUTTLE
HMMM...



A LONG FLIGHT, BUT HE IS
OCCUPIED ALONG THE WAY
BY TALES OF WORLD-CLASS
REEFS AND PELAGIC
ENCOUNTERS...



AND
UNAWARE THAT
HE IS BEING OBSERVED
BY A PAIR OF STRANGERS



A STOPOVER IN SINGAPORE
ALLOWS HIM TO STRETCH AND
TAKE IN THE SIGHTS BEFORE
CONTINUING ON TO...



REPUBLIC OF
THE MALDIVES!

IN NO TIME AT ALL HE IS WHISKED OFF TO A NEARBY RESORT



UNPACKING HE DISCOVERS SOMETHING IN HIS LUGGAGE...



EVER INQUISITIVE, HE TOSSES THE THING IN HIS DIVE BAG...



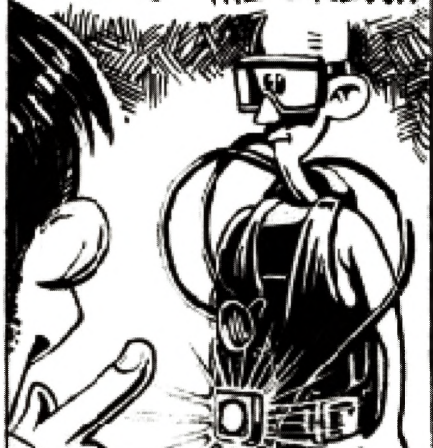
THE FOLLOWING DAY HE CHUGS OFF FOR THE DIVE SITE FOR HIS FIRST DIVE, A SITE KNOWN AS... EMBUDAHUTHULUFINOLUGIRI-FUSHIDHOO!



HIS DIVE BUDDY TURNS OUT TO BE A FAMILIAR UH... FACE



BENT'S SPECIAL DIVE WEIGHT CREATES SOMETHING OF A STIR AMONG THE CREW..



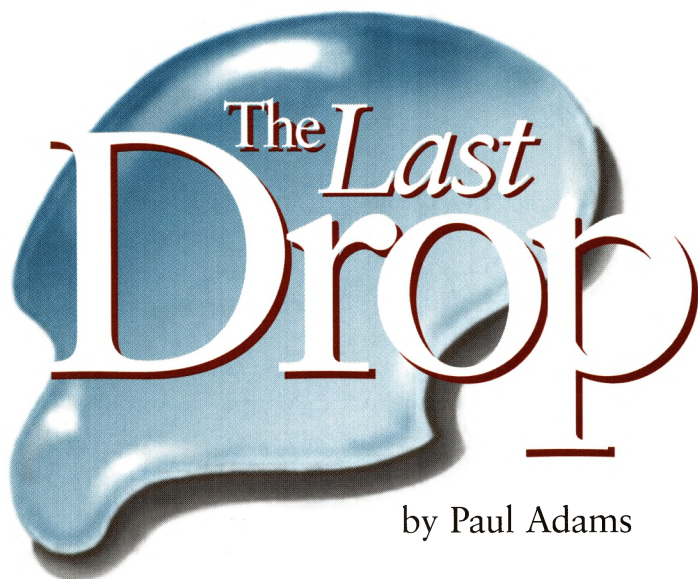
BUT, OF COURSE, MCSNORKEL IS USED TO BEING ADMIRER FOR HIS DIVING PANACHE



MEANWHILE, BACK ON THE BOAT...



1997 *J. Nimmo*



by Paul Adams

A picture is worth a thousand words, or so the saying goes, but sometimes a few figures are worth a thousand pictures...

Year first U.S. military base was established in Thailand: 1962
Average daily expenditure by candidates in 1996 Thai prime minister campaign, in U.S. dollars: 27 million
Average daily expenditure by candidates in 1996 U.S. presidential campaign, in U.S. dollars: 1.4 million
Percentage decrease in Thai teak forest acreage between 1900 and 1961: 6
Percentage decrease in Thai teak forest acreage between 1961 and 1984: 50
Year in which Thai government instituted a total ban on teak logging: 1989
Percentage decrease in rate of Thai teak logging between 1984 and 1994: 9

Gestation period of a sperm whale, in months: 15
Relation of a sperm whale's head to overall body length, in percentage: 33
Oil contained in an average sperm whale's head, in pounds: 8,000
Average weight of a male sperm whale, in pounds: 80,000
Average weight of a sperm whale's brain, in pounds: 20
Average rate of descent in a sperm whale dive, in feet per minute: 560

Number of languages spoken in Papua New Guinea: 846
Percentage of world's land mass that is Papua New Guinea: 1
Percentage of world's wildlife in Papua New Guinea: 5
Percentage of Papua New Guinean mammals that are marsupials: 33
Wingspan of Papua New Guinea's Queen Alexandra birdwing butterfly, in feet: 1
Number of Australians in Papua New Guinea in 1940: 6,000
Number of Australians in Papua New Guinea in 1971: 50,000
Number of Australians in Papua New Guinea in 1993: 20,000
Percentage of Papua New Guinea budget made up by Australian aid in 1946: 2
Percentage of Papua New Guinea budget made up by Australian aid in 1975: 50
Percentage of Papua New Guinea budget made up by Australian aid in 1995: 5
Years since Papua New Guinea natives have been allowed to drink alcohol: 34
Papua New Guinea Gross National Product per capita, in U.S. dollars: 950

British Virgin Islands Gross National Product per capita, in U.S. dollars: 10,600
Average annual temperature in British Virgin Islands, in degrees Fahrenheit: 80
Price of a one-pound bag of ice in the British Virgin Islands, in U.S. dollars: 8
Percentage of tourists to British Virgin Islands who are housed offshore: 67

Sources: *The Adventure Guide to the Virgin Islands*, Harry S. Pariser, 1994; *CIA World Factbook*, 1996; Datec, Ltd.; *Fodor's Guide to the Virgin Islands*, 1995; *Lonely Planet Guide—Papua New Guinea*, 1993; Marine Mammal Stranding Center; *Might* magazine; NECTEC database, www.nectec.or.th; *Thailand: A Country Study*, ed. Barbara Leitch LePoer, 1987; The Meerkat Mpango, www.meerkat.org; *The New York Times*; University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.



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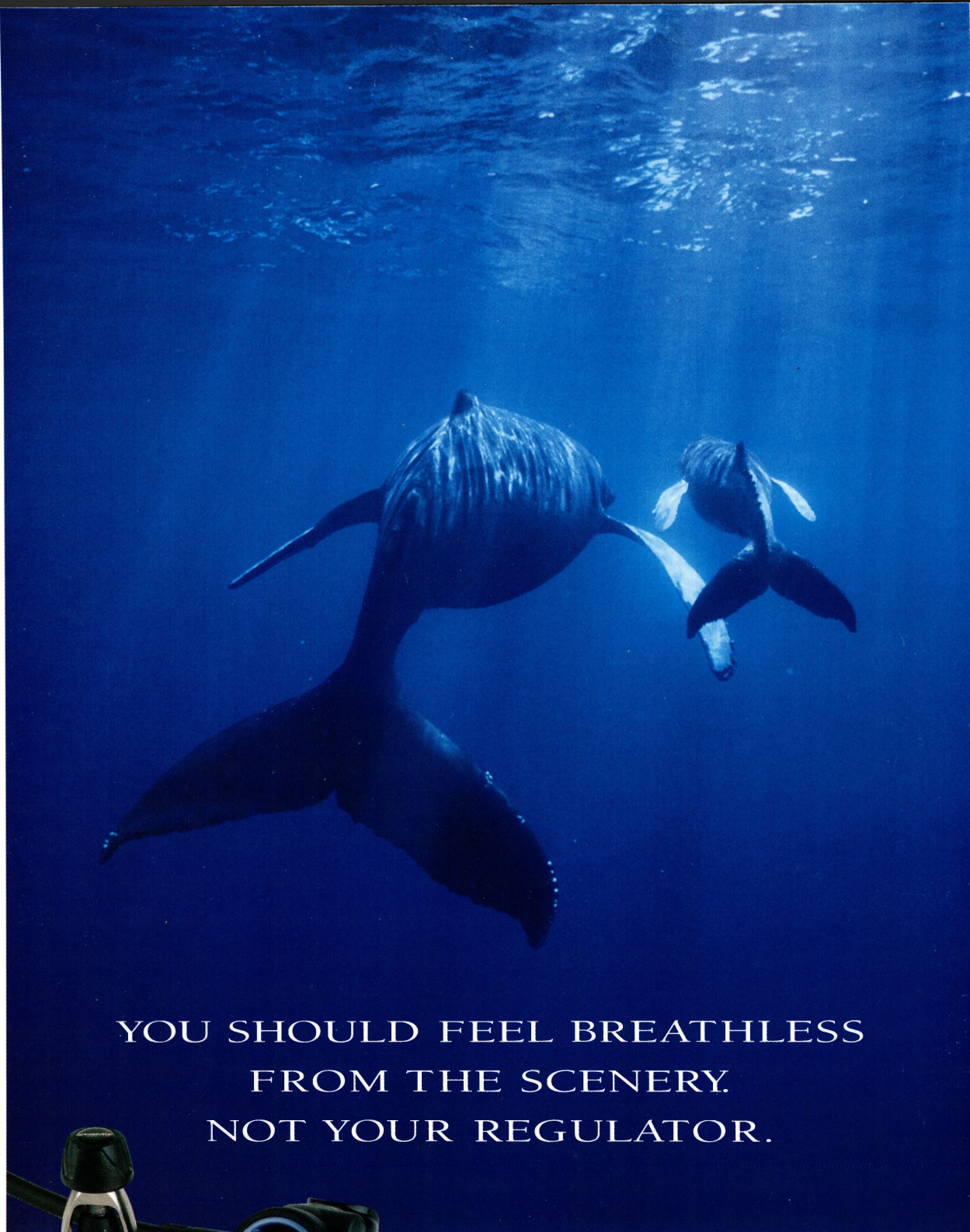
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